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FT Weekend Magazine

HOME
·
A photography special

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JANUARY 10 2026

FROM 'ONE BED, TWO BLANKETS, EIGHTY-FIVE RULES' BY SABINE HESS AND NICOLAS POLLI

HOME

A PHOTOGRAPHY SPECIAL

We begin at Graceland, home of Elvis Presley, now a museum and pilgrimage site. The photographs by William Eggleston, with an accompanying piece written for this special issue by his son, Winston, point to how the arrangement of objects can express taste or identity. But what happens when those careful constructions are blown apart or abandoned? What does it mean to start again? From documenting destroyed homes in Ukraine, Syria and the West Bank to makeshift ones in Jordan, many of the artists here are responding to the urgent questions of our time. Others ask how we might imagine the home differently and, as in Carrie Mae Weems' iconic "Kitchen Table Series", break free from the conventions that have governed it. Home is both a place and an idea, something we make and remake anew.

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Christopher Nunn
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ON THE COVER
UNTITLED, 1983-84 *by* WILLIAM EGGLESTON
© EGGLESTON ARTISTIC TRUST.
COURTESY EGGLESTON ARTISTIC TRUST AND DAVID ZWIRNER

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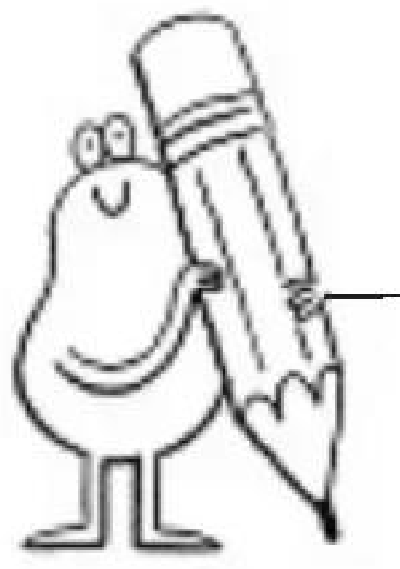

MARGINALIA *by* NADINE REDLICH

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Letters

FROM THE ARCHIVES: GENIUS AND THE GHOST

by Sam Knight

As a biochemist I find this story sad and at the same time very exciting. Thank you, FT, for digging up this 17-year-old article.

CENTURIO VIA FT.COM

I'm pretty much read-only in the comments, but this piece moved me to get on with it. Thank you for this beautiful, poignant story, and especially to Wylen for sharing it. Stories like this can save lives. And, as someone here in the US fatigued by what has become of "mental health awareness", the subtlety and honesty presented here was refreshing. Bravo!

POPPY NOGOOD VIA FT.COM

THE ART OF MAINTENANCE

by Tim Harford

There's nothing wrong with maintenance, which is indeed meditative. My best O-level grade was in needlework, and it is of more use than any other subject I took. I can keep sometimes expensive clothes going for years. I will even mend tea-towels, pillowcases and sheets. If they are good to start with, then they are worth keeping in good shape.

GIOVANNA FORTE, BRIGHTON

NOODLES WORTH GETTING WEIRD ABOUT

by Jay Rayner

Such a great article. This year will be my year of the Jay Rayner restaurant crawl.

CAMBESANS VIA FT.COM

A LEAGUE OF HIS OWN

by Miles Johnson

Fascinating. I had assumed I would automatically despise arms dealers. Just the title has the instant cachet of a Bond villain. But I ended up rather admiring this guy. You can't fault his work ethic or tenacity.

UNWISE INVESTOR II VIA FT.COM

An unflinching glimpse into the underbelly of war. I am dismayed by Somerindyke's detached pragmatism, brokering destruction for conflicts that consume countless innocent lives. Yet, I cannot help but admit that this is the reality of a system where demand begets supply. His matter-of-fact attitude would inevitably be filled by another. Nevertheless, it does pose a sobering reflection: true evil in our world often resides not in singular monsters, but in the ordinary compliance that keeps the gears of atrocity turning.

ECLECTICVIEWS VIA FT.COM

Just finished this in the print edition. For me it's the read of the year.

LOUIS FROM LEWES VIA FT.COM

Excellent journalism and what feels like a balanced and fair portrayal of the man and the industry, both good and bad. A proper piece of journalistic craft that is all too uncommon today.

OSCAR L. VIA FT.COM

LEARNING YORUBA WITH MY DAUGHTER

by Oyinkan Braithwaite

Lovely article. I'm as cockney as they come but did a two-year project at a Nigerian company in the City. I picked up a bit of the language and the smile on an unknowing Nigerian's face when a white man busts out a heartfelt "*Bawo ni*?" was always worth it.

DAN_GLEBLES VIA FT.COM

FAITH AND FERMENTATION

by NC Stevens

God bless him, we need people like him to keep Catholicism weird.

LA VALSE VIA FT.COM

CRYSTAL PALACE'S WILD THINGS

by Henry Wismayer

Nice to hear that some investment is being made in the park. It's so varied and interesting and so down at heel. Hopefully it'll come through. There have been plans like this before. Love the dinosaurs!

DAYS OF OUR LIVES VIA FT.COM

YOUR 'WHAT IF?' QUESTIONS ANSWERED

by Tim Harford

Well, that was a great and welcome read. I still like the idea of land value tax. Some of the others, not so much.

TRUBLOFF VIA FT.COM

Tim says it is "perfectly possible to imagine" an economy where all land is owned by the government. You don't need to imagine this. In Hong Kong, the only freehold land is that occupied by St John's Cathedral. All other land is government owned and leased out for set periods. The resulting land revenues help the government maintain very low levels of personal and corporate tax.

That this situation exists in what is reckoned to be one of the most free-market economies in the world (as opposed to, say, a North Korea) is perhaps the more surprising.

ANDREW SEATON, LONDON

FT Weekend Magazine
The Archive Issue

DECEMBER 27
FROM THE ARCHIVES

FT Weekend Magazine

DECEMBER 20
ARMS DEALER

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WHAT WINES ARE WORTH CELLARING?

by Jancis Robinson

A useful overview for those looking to start building cellars in these days of crazy wine pricing. It makes me realise how lucky our generation was to have been able to buy significant quantities of classified bordeaux and burgundies in the 1990s and first half of the 2000s at reasonable prices. Even older vintages were cheap in the '90s!

THE SUNSHINE BORES THE DAYLIGHTS OUT OF ME. VIA FT.COM

HAVEN'T WE MET BEFORE?

by Miranda Green

A few years ago I was engrossed with *Line of Duty* and crossed paths with Adrian Dunbar right outside a hotel in Dublin. I just caught myself before reaching out to offer a handshake and saying hello. He realised I had recognised him, gave me a nod, and we both kept walking.

CROWNFIELD VIA FT.COM

GAMES GREMLINS

Alas your Word Circle has developed a fault! A highlight of my Saturday morning was shattered when the solutions to number 89 were littered with errors. Included were 35 words that broke your own rules by not including the centre letter. A one-off mistake? A glance at number 90 suggests a gremlin is still at work. A most puzzling Christmas mystery.

ED SYKES, LONDON

↩ Our apologies. The gremlin has been vanquished and normal service has resumed. See this week's Games pages solutions.

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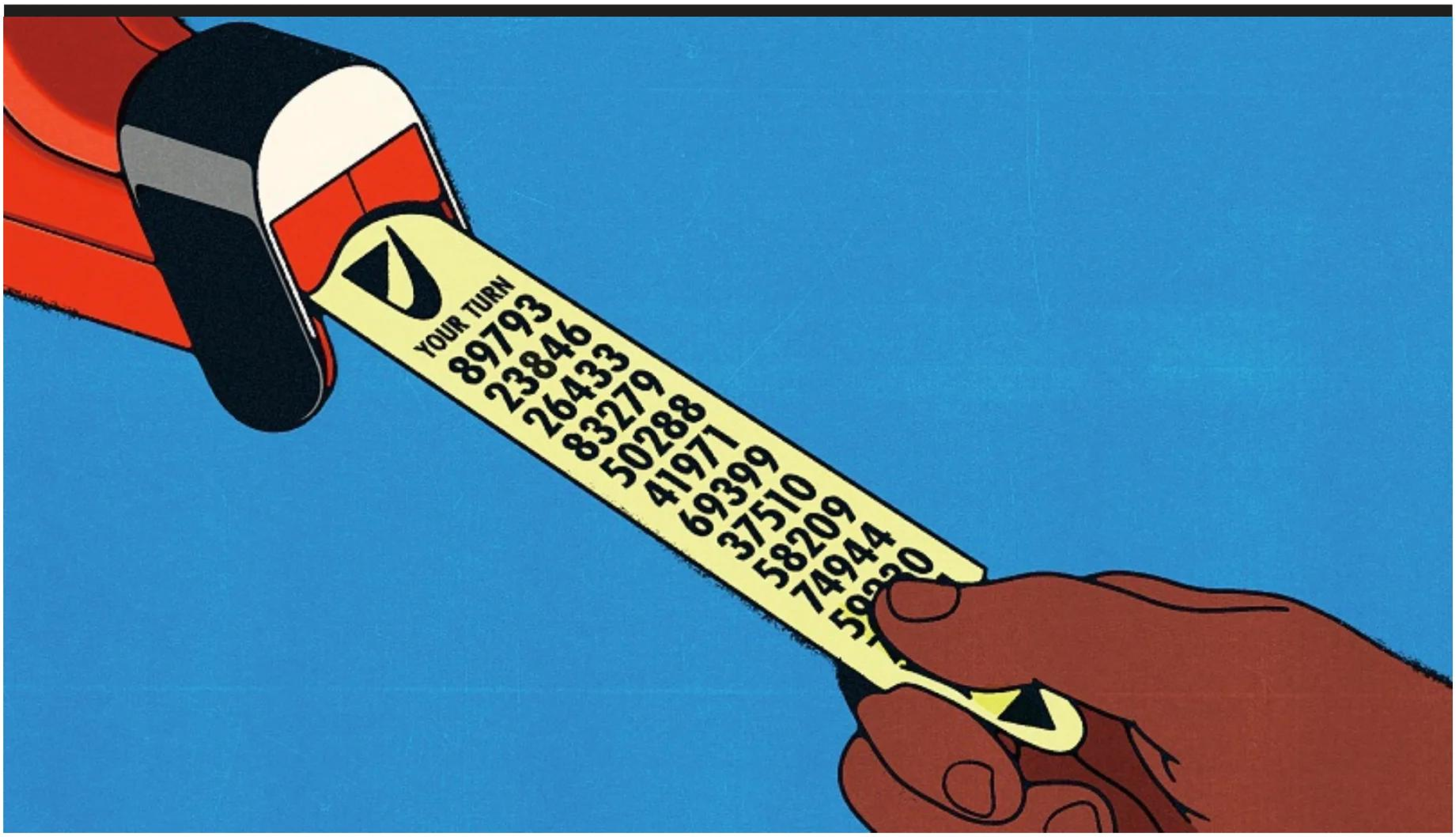
Intellect



Undercover Economist

Why Britain gets stuck in line

by TIM HARFORD

ILLUSTRATION *by* ALBERTO MIRANDA

As a way of dealing with high demand, the age-old practice of forming a long, orderly queue has something to be said for it: simplicity, transparency and equal treatment for all. But no matter how much the British are said to love a queue, you can have too much of a good thing. The UK's public services are under strain in all sorts of ways and it is striking how many of the problems can be described as a gridlock of hidden queues.

Consider ambulance response times. Ambulances in England are supposed to arrive within a given target time, depending on how urgent the situation is. In "category 2" situations such as heart attacks and strokes (aka pretty damned urgent), the target is to respond in 18 minutes on average. The bad news is that the NHS isn't hitting these targets: in November last year, the average response for category 2 calls was more than 32 minutes, the worst since last January. The good news is that things have been much worse than that in recent memory: at the end of 2022, the average response time was more than an hour. That's the result of a queue that not even the British could love.

Why is this happening? The obvious explanation is that there are not enough ambulances, but the deeper problem is that ambulances themselves are being delayed in discharging patients into A&E units, which are themselves often overwhelmed: in the first quarter of 2014, 134 patients waited more than 12 hours in A&E before being admitted; 10 years later the figure was 141,693. The long delays in A&E are in part the result of the hospital beds all being full and that, in turn, is in part because hospitals sometimes struggle to discharge vulnerable patients into an overstretched social care system. All of these problems are a kind of queue and they all interact in a surprising way: you can die waiting for an ambulance because there aren't enough nursing homes in your area.

What is striking is that the same pattern emerges in other parts of the public sector. For example, the prison system is full almost to capacity. That is partly the result of three decades of successive governments deciding that sentencing guidelines should be punitive, while also being unwilling to build enough prisons. But it is also the result of interacting queues: about one-fifth of the prison population is either awaiting a trial or awaiting a sentence, which means that delays in the court system feed into crowding in the prison system.

> You can die waiting for an ambulance because there aren't enough nursing homes in your area

The study of queues dates back more than a century, with the initial spark coming from a mathematically gifted Danish telephone engineer named Agner K Erlang. Erlang combined his elegant mathematical ideas with a practical approach. He wandered around the streets of Copenhagen accompanied by a ladder-bearing assistant so that Erlang could descend through manholes to measure currents. (The unit of load on a queue-processing element, whether a telephone line, a supermarket checkout or a toilet cubicle in a theatre, is the erlang. So now you know.)

Since Erlang, the modelling of queues has blossomed, along with an alphabet soup of acronyms, including PQ (priority queuing), FCFS (first come first served – as any true Briton would advise) and the suspiciously continental-sounding SIRO (service in random order). The queuing literature has produced many ideas and, while some of the conclusions are obvious (queues form when there isn't enough capacity to match demand), there are subtleties worth pondering.

First, when bottlenecks feed into bottlenecks, some strategic thinking is required to fix the system. There is often more than one bottleneck in a congested system and opening that bottleneck will sometimes mean the same queue builds up somewhere else.

Second, the optimum queuing time probably isn't zero. In most cases, demand arrives at irregular intervals and it is likely to be impractically wasteful to have so much capacity (so many doctors, so many ambulances, so many crown courts) that even after a sudden surge in demand, nobody has to wait.

That said, the optimum queuing time should probably be kept quite short. Imagine a situation where an emergency doctor can see four patients an hour and patients arrive every 15 minutes. At first everything is fine: every patient can be seen immediately. Then something goes wrong. Perhaps there's a sudden rush, when five patients unexpectedly arrive together. Perhaps the doctor takes an hour off for lunch. The waiting time suddenly increases from nothing to an hour, even though the doctor is still seeing four patients an hour and four patients an hour are still arriving.

The moral of this very simple story is that even if the capacity of the system is equal to the demand for it, queues can grow and then stay at unpleasant lengths. What's needed is a little extra capacity to work through the inevitable queues that build up from time to time. Unfortunately, systems under intense pressure rarely have a little extra capacity hanging around.

Third, it can be hard to increase the capacity of a system. Let's say that we have one million nurses and each nurse trains for two years before working for 20. Arithmetically, that requires 100,000 nurses to be in training at any given moment. What if it is decided that we need 1.1 million trained nurses and we need them as soon as possible? That would require an immediate recruitment boost, doubling the number of nurses in training.

Would that be possible? Even though the expansion in nursing personnel seems modest, it requires nursing courses to double in size and then to shrink again after a couple of years. An even more dramatic expansion will be needed at the advanced training colleges at which the teachers of nursing are themselves trained. It might be easier to persuade nurses to stay a little longer in the profession or to recruit from the Philippines.

This unpleasant arithmetic makes it all the more frustrating when the obstacles to capacity expansion seem unnecessary. My colleague Sarah O'Connor recently described the large stock of frustrated foreign-qualified dentists in the UK who cannot practice dentistry because they are waiting to take a registration exam. There are 8,000 dentists on the waiting list; 350 of them scrambled through the chaotic registration process in 2024. At this rate everyone now on the waiting list will be able to practise dentistry before 2050.

Queuing can be a fiendishly difficult problem to solve, but not always. Sometimes the free lunch is right in front of us, waiting to be eaten. **FT**

DEPARTMENTS

REPORTS *from* LESSER-KNOWN
FT BUREAUX

CULTURE

Italian gestures explained

Calma!/Stay calm/Calm down!
Gently pat a downward palm

Poche Chiacchiere – Fatti!/Less chat, more facts, or Less talk, more action
Hit back of hand against outstretched palm

Barba [beard]/This is tiresome
Stroke a long, imaginary beard

Che bello/How beautiful [indicating quality]
Rub palms together

Che palle! [what balls]/Give me a break!
Cup immense and imaginary testicles

SOURCE: 'SCHOTT'S SIGNIFICA: AN UNEXPECTEDLY ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO LANGUAGE' (PENGUIN/MICHAEL JOSEPH)

FILM

The director's curse

Diary entry from actor Matthew Modine on the set of *Full Metal Jacket*, January 10 1986: "Stanley [Kubrick] keeps calling me a 'c**t'. This is a charming English expression that he's adopted. A prehistoric, early-man, guttural grunt. The sound a Cro-Magnon would make before he took a big bone and beat your head in."

SOURCE: 'DIARIES OF NOTE', COMPILED BY SHAUN USHER (FABER)

GLOSSARY

Four German neologisms that describe everyday sensations

Tageslichtspielschock (DAY-LIGHT-SHOW-SHOCK) Being startled when exiting a cinema into broad daylight

Mahlneid (MEAL-ENVY) Coveting thy neighbour's restaurant order

Enlistungsfreude (DE-LISTING-JOY) The sense of satisfaction afforded by crossing things off lists

Luftfahrtorigaminiedergeschlagenheit (AVIATION-ORIGAMI-DESPONDENCY) The sense of deflation when your paper airplane falls straight to the ground

SOURCE: 'SCHOTTENFREUDE: GERMAN WORDS FOR THE HUMAN CONDITION' BY BEN SCHOTT (JOHN MURRAY)

LAST WEEK'S THEME: TWIXTMAS

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World View

Defining Donald Trump

by SIMON KUPER

ILLUSTRATION *by* HARRY HAYSOM

Is Donald Trump a fascist? The question is central to attempts to understand him. He has disappeared migrants into camps, sent troops into Democrat-run cities, "spread a message of violence" to try to overturn an election result, according to a Congressional committee, accused migrants of "poisoning the blood of our country", expressed contempt for courts and, last week, sent US forces to capture the president of Venezuela.

I'll focus on expert uses of the concept "fascist", rather than amateurs wielding the term as an insult. Historians including Robert Paxton (author of *The Anatomy of Fascism*) and Timothy Snyder have labelled Trump fascist, while Ruth Ben-Ghiat says he deploys "the fascist arsenal". Over 400 academics, including 31 Nobel laureates, signed a letter warning that today's far-right movements often bear "unmistakably fascist traits". Trump's voters (who overwhelmingly aren't fascists) tend to mock these accusations as liberal hysteria. The debate is complicated by our association of fascism with the Holocaust and world war – though these were the endpoints of only one brand of fascism.

Two guides I've found to answer the question are Umberto Eco's 1995 essay, "Ur-Fascism", and now a new German collection of academic essays, *Wenn das Gestern anklopft* ("When Yesterday Knocks"), edited by Philipp Ruch and Thomas Weber. Reading Eco, the parallels between Trump's methods and fascism become obvious; but the German collection persuaded me that his worldview and aims are distinct from fascism.

Eco, the multi-faceted scholar who spent his childhood in Mussolini's Italy, drew up a general checklist of features of "Ur-Fascism". Trump has been ticking them off. He regularly treats disagreement as "treason", and leads what Eco calls "the cult of action for action's sake".

Ur-Fascism, according to Eco, tells supporters "that their only privilege is the most common one, to be born in the same country". Its basic message is "fear of difference... an appeal against the intruders". That means Ur-Fascism's psychology is rooted in "the obsession with a plot, possibly an international one".

In Eco's diagnosis, historical fascism typically appeals "to a frustrated middle-class". He forecasts that as "old 'proletarians' are becoming petty bourgeois... the fascism of tomorrow will find its audience in this new majority".

Ur-Fascism is macho, continues Eco. It uses "an impoverished vocabulary, and an elementary syntax, in order to limit the instruments for complex and critical reasoning". Its leader claims to speak for "the people"; Eco foresees a "TV or internet populism, in which the emotional response of a selected group of citizens can be presented... as the Voice of the People."

> The nearest modern equivalent to the patrimonial clan leader is the mafia boss

So much for Trump's methods. Yet a brilliant essay in the German collection, by Thomas Weber, historian at the University of Aberdeen, illuminates how his ideology differs from Hitler's.

Hitler valorised the collective "*Volk*", which unites for the highest human purpose: war. This required a strong bureaucratic state. Trump, by contrast, thinks war is stupid. The fascist cult of heroic death leaves him cold. He avoids wars, only attacking countries too weak to respond, like Iran, Venezuela and, later perhaps, Greenland.

Weber theorises that Trump believes in neither state nor society, but in an extreme version of American capitalism without rules and that he sees the highest human purpose as self-enrichment. His family's monetisation of the presidency is unabashed, even proud, because he thinks it's natural. To him, it seems, a government is a family business, not an army support system.

Trump resembles a premodern patrimonial leader from the era before states, argue Stephen Hanson and Jeffrey Kopstein in another essay in *Wenn das Gestern anklopft*. In other words, he is more Iron Age chieftain than a fascist leading a modern state. Indeed, he tasked Elon Musk with axing chunks of the state.

A patrimonial leader deals one on one with leaders of rival clans, observing codes of mutual respect. He rules through an extended family household. Whereas Hitler presented himself as a man without family, even making his sister change her surname to Wolf, Trump entrusts key roles to relatives: his son-in-law Jared Kushner flies around trying to make peace (and money), while Trump's sons run the family crypto businesses.

The nearest modern equivalent to the patrimonial leader is the mafia boss – a point that Weber connects to Trump's love of mafia movies. Trump represents a version of political authoritarianism that we've barely seen for centuries.

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VIEW OF GRACELAND: THE ABSENCE OF ELVIS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY WILLIAM EGGLESTON

WORDS BY WINSTON EGGLESTON

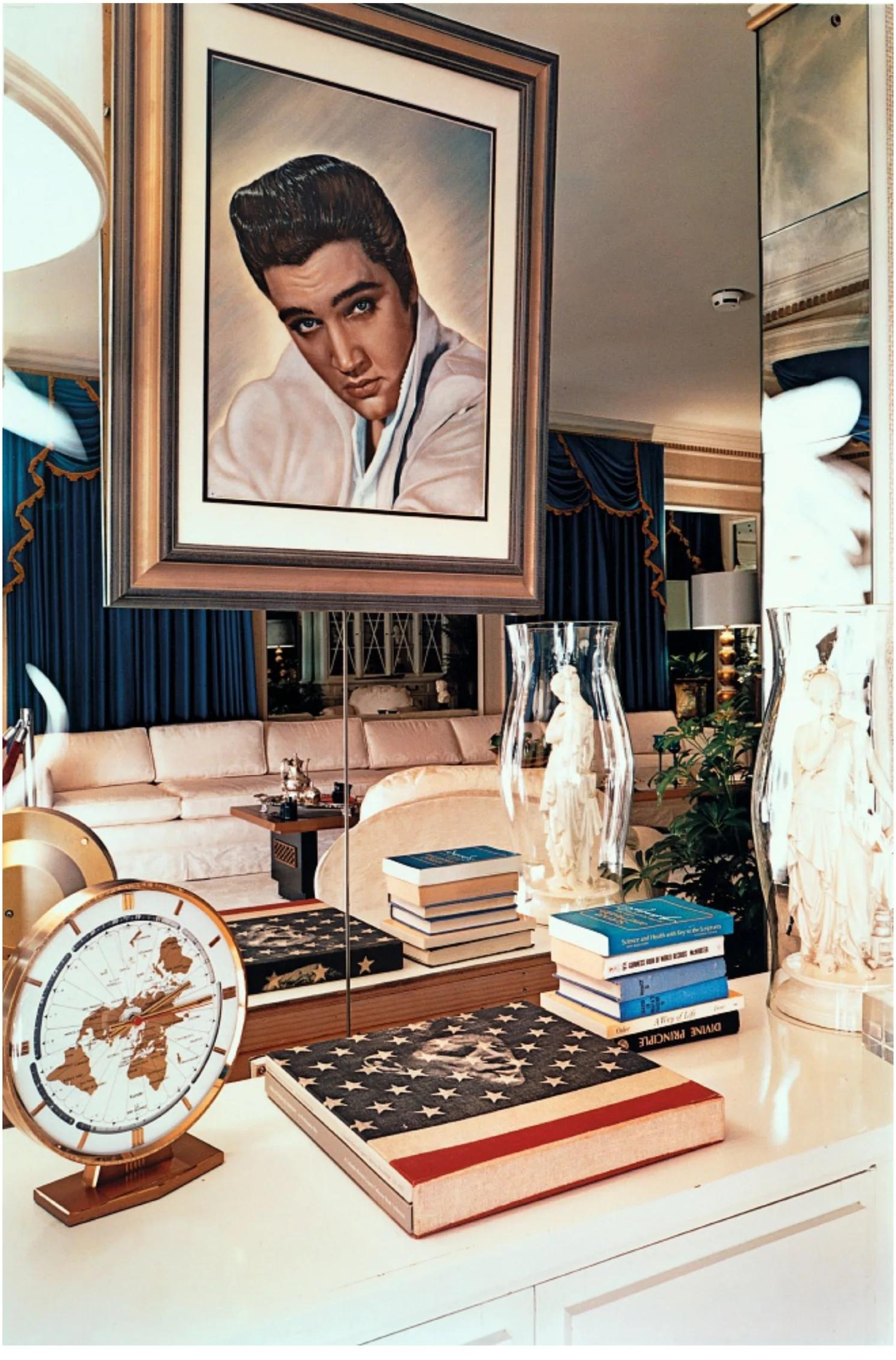
WILLIAM EGGLESTON WAS BOTH AN OBVIOUS AND STRANGE CHOICE OF THE estate of Elvis Presley to photograph Graceland. Both men were born in the 1930s and raised in Mississippi, the border of which is mere miles from Graceland. My dad, who has played piano since he was four years old, is a great lover of classical music, particularly Bach. Yet, in truth, he wasn't a fan of Elvis.

About five years after Elvis died, the estate contacted Dad to photograph Graceland. The commission was initially for the publication of a small book to be sold as a souvenir in the gift shop. It had pictures of the grounds, interiors and many possessions Elvis left behind. Elvis was 42 years old when he died in 1977 at his home. Graceland was a postbellum mansion built in 1939 that he purchased in 1957. Since then, the musician's compound had become an enduring symbol of Memphis, opened to the public as a museum in June of 1982 to much fanfare. After the book was published, Dad decided to have larger prints made of some of the images. In cooperation with the estate, he then published the portfolio Graceland, which comprised 11 20"x24" dye-transfer prints.

My dad had never met Elvis, but he met several times with his widow Priscilla Presley, who agreed to let him photograph the ground floor of the house in the evenings, after it was closed to the public. She gave him an extensive tour of the property and shared her memories with him. Dad took the photographs at Graceland between 1983 and 1984. My siblings and I accompanied and assisted him on a number of occasions. At the time, Elvis's aunt Delta actually still lived there.

Photographing this commission was tricky because my dad's work is democratic and neutral. The irony is that the end results symbolise a particular strain of American success and tragedy. FT

The complete Graceland portfolio, "Untitled, 1983-84", consists of 11 dye transfer prints. "William Eggleston: The Last Dyes" is at David Zwirner New York from January 15



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Inside Graceland (right); Eggleston's photographs of Presley's gold-leafed Kimball grand piano (opposite left) and Chamberlin Music Master 600 organ (opposite right) in the mansion

KAZ/KÒ

BY NATHYFA MICHEL

IN RÉGINA, ON THE QUIET BANKS OF THE APPROUAGUE RIVER, FRENCH GUIANA, houses disappear the same way people do: not abruptly, but through a gradual fading. The village has been hollowed out by a rural exodus toward the capital Cayenne or to mainland France, by land disputes, abandonment and plots being reclaimed for unpaid taxes. My family was among those who left early, leaving behind our home, our grandmother and part of our history.

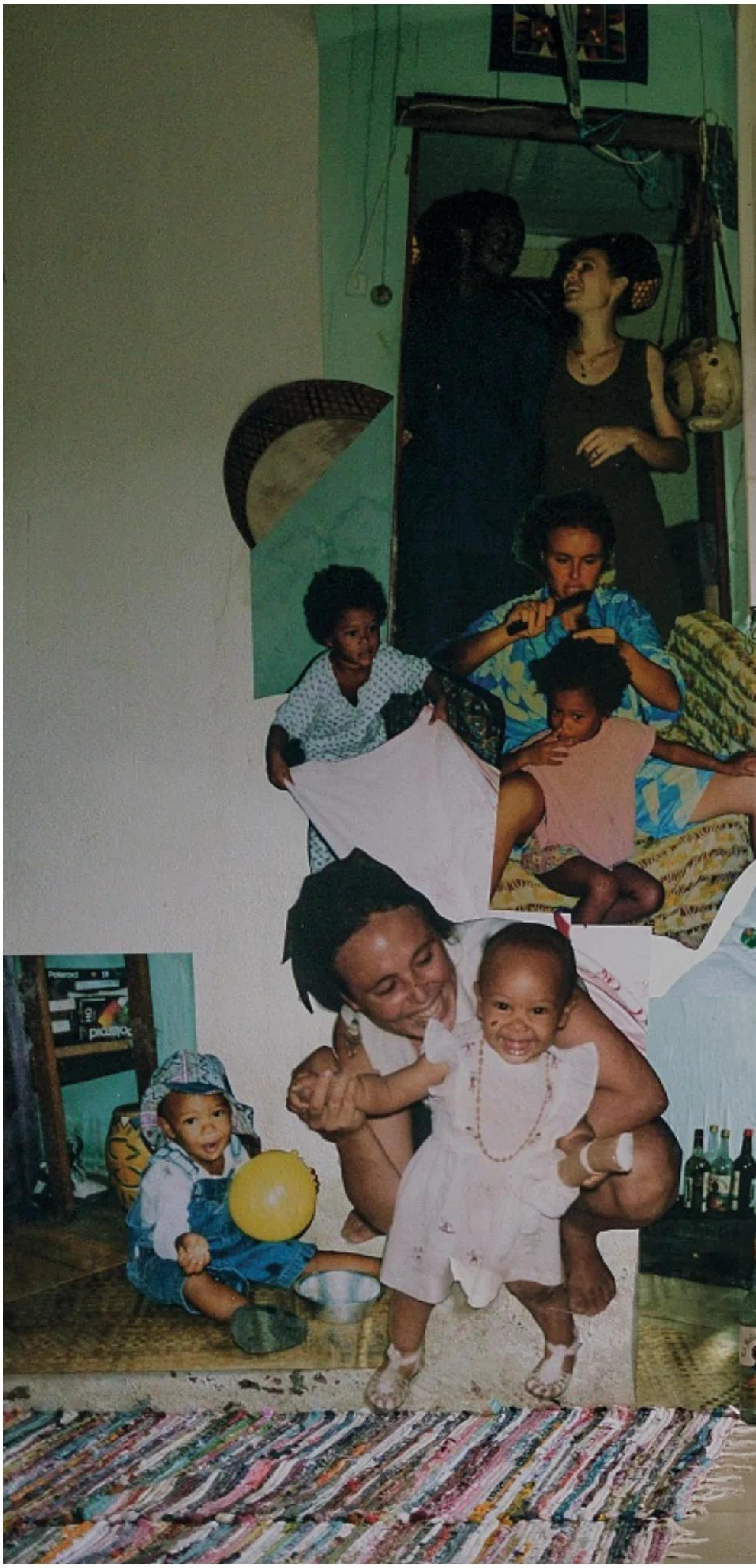
In French Guiana, a colony turned French department in 1946, the French state still owns 90 per cent of the land. Today, the municipality of Régina conducts an extensive (though often opaque) campaign to recover vacant plots. Throughout the town, signs announce an "owner's absence"; after a year's notice, the land is reclaimed by the commune. Ours is one of the last houses still standing in the village centre. Although legally ours, it was slated for demolition to "make space" in a place already emptied.

My project *KAZ/KÒ* emerged in response to this news. Built by a grandfather I never knew, the house holds some of the missing pieces of a fragmented family history. Faced with its looming disappearance, I staged an in-situ installation intended to reactivate the house's layered memories. The installation soon became a playground to experiment with ways of reconnecting my body to the house's invisible presences. I revisited mourning rituals, listened for forgotten memories caught in spider webs or scattered in termite nests. I sang, sweated and wept as I assembled on the wall an archival collage that functioned as both photographic shroud and record.

At the centre of the house, an altar gathers objects found on site and items left by visitors. It grows and expands continually, becoming a shared space where a constellation of memories converge as a quiet act of resistance against erasure.

Since its inception in spring 2025, *KAZ/KÒ* has evolved into a space for exchange. After collaborating with me on the installation, my father returned from Europe to settle back in Régina, now using the space to pass on his knowledge of craft – especially calabash engraving – and his invaluable memories of French Guiana. Even under threat of demolition, *KAZ/KÒ* stands strong as a site of transmission. FT

The installation "KAZ/KÒ" is open daily, nathyfamichel.com/galerie-kaz-ko



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CONDITIONS OF LIVING

BY ANTHONY LUVERA

HOUSING
FOR PEOPLE
OR PROFIT?

Above left: “Like a blade of light, its glass fin protruding dramatically”, The Relay Building, Aldgate, London

Above right: billboard installation of ‘Housing For People or Profit?’, Roman Road, Bethnal Green, London

“CONDITIONS OF LIVING” EXAMINES THE RISE OF ECONOMIC SEGREGATION in housing developments, a phenomenon commonly referred to as “poor doors”. Created in collaboration with a community forum of residents in Tower Hamlets, east London, this socially engaged project draws on extensive research into the social, political and economic evolution of market-driven “affordable” housing and the state of social housing today.

Brought together from almost 1,000 households in eight developments, participants in the Conditions of Living Community Forum have a range of housing tenure backgrounds, from social and affordable rental accommodation to shared and sole ownership. Through photography, sound recordings and facilitated discussions, we explored how economic segregation operates in daily life, and how restrictions extend beyond separate entrances to influence access to amenities, resources and public space. Workshops and individual meetings invited participants to consider why segregated entrances exist and how architecture and planning shape access to essential social rights, including healthcare, education, culture, transport and environment.

Segregation in housing developments can manifest in many ways: physically separate entrances; floors reserved for non-market-rate units; isolated lifts or internal sections; entire blocks designated for specific tenures; and restricted communal facilities. Local authorities continue to permit developers to embed such divisions into new schemes. Despite public criticism, London remains one of the few major global cities yet to ban “poor doors”.

The built environment plays a powerful role in determining the ways people live together. Architecture and planning can be used to enforce social inequalities through the privileging of market forces, resulting in discrimination and segregation. “Conditions of Living” brings together research and the experiences of those living in the buildings to construct an image of this much discussed, yet often invisible phenomenon. The project invites us to reflect on these convoluted systems and contemplate alternative possibilities for housing conditions, communal living and collective action. FT

“Conditions of Living” by Anthony Luvera is published by Dulwich Road Studio Press

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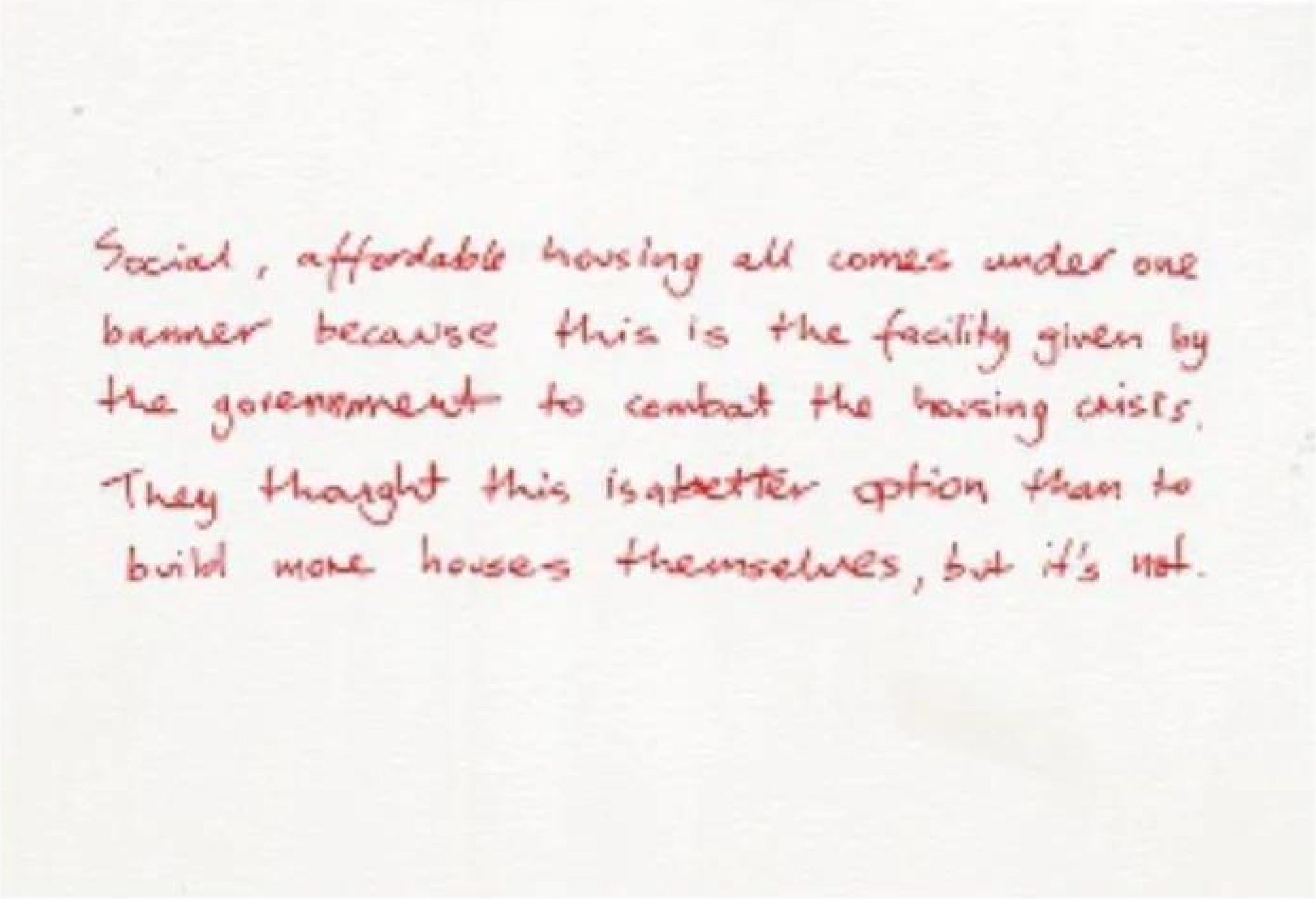
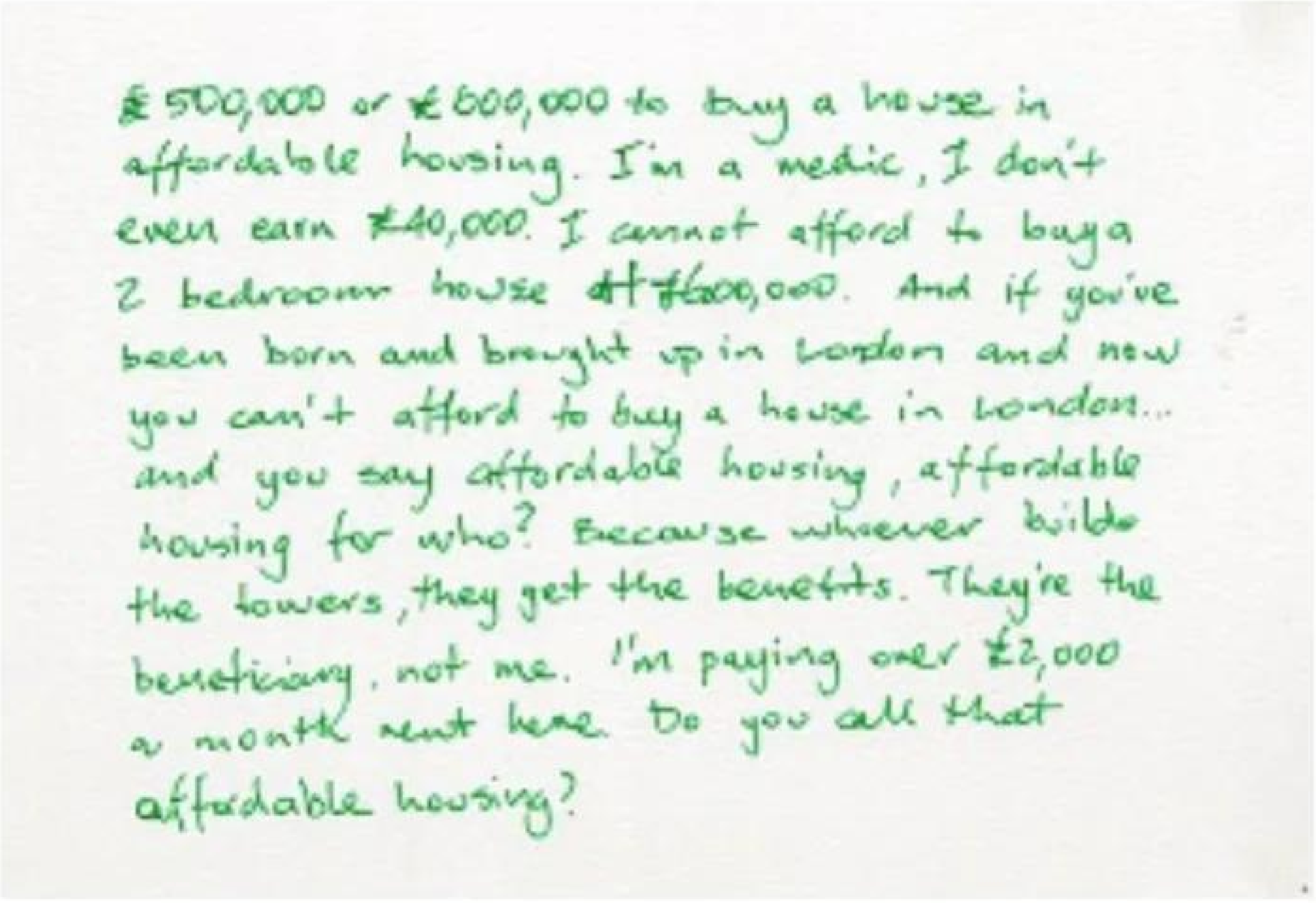
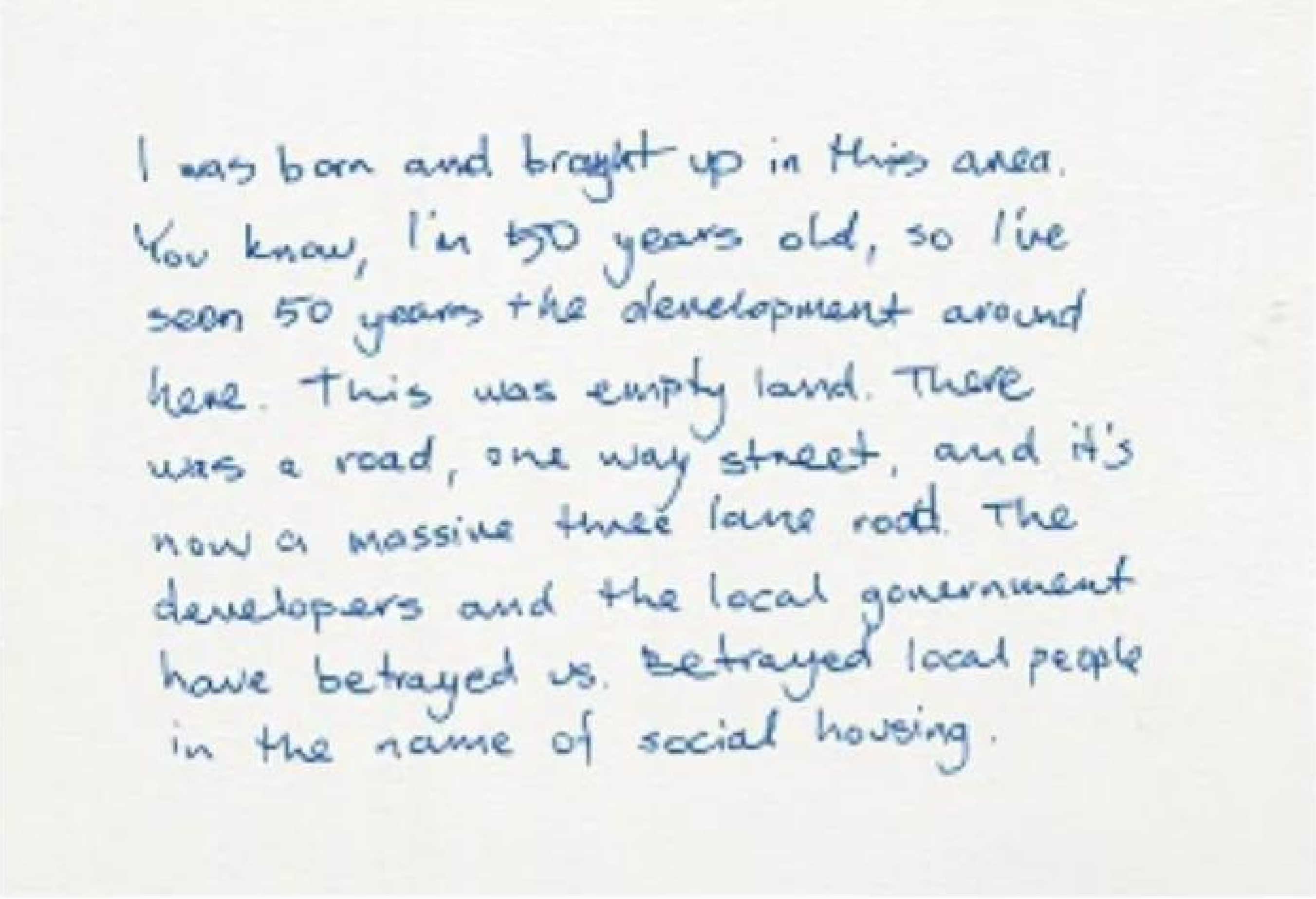


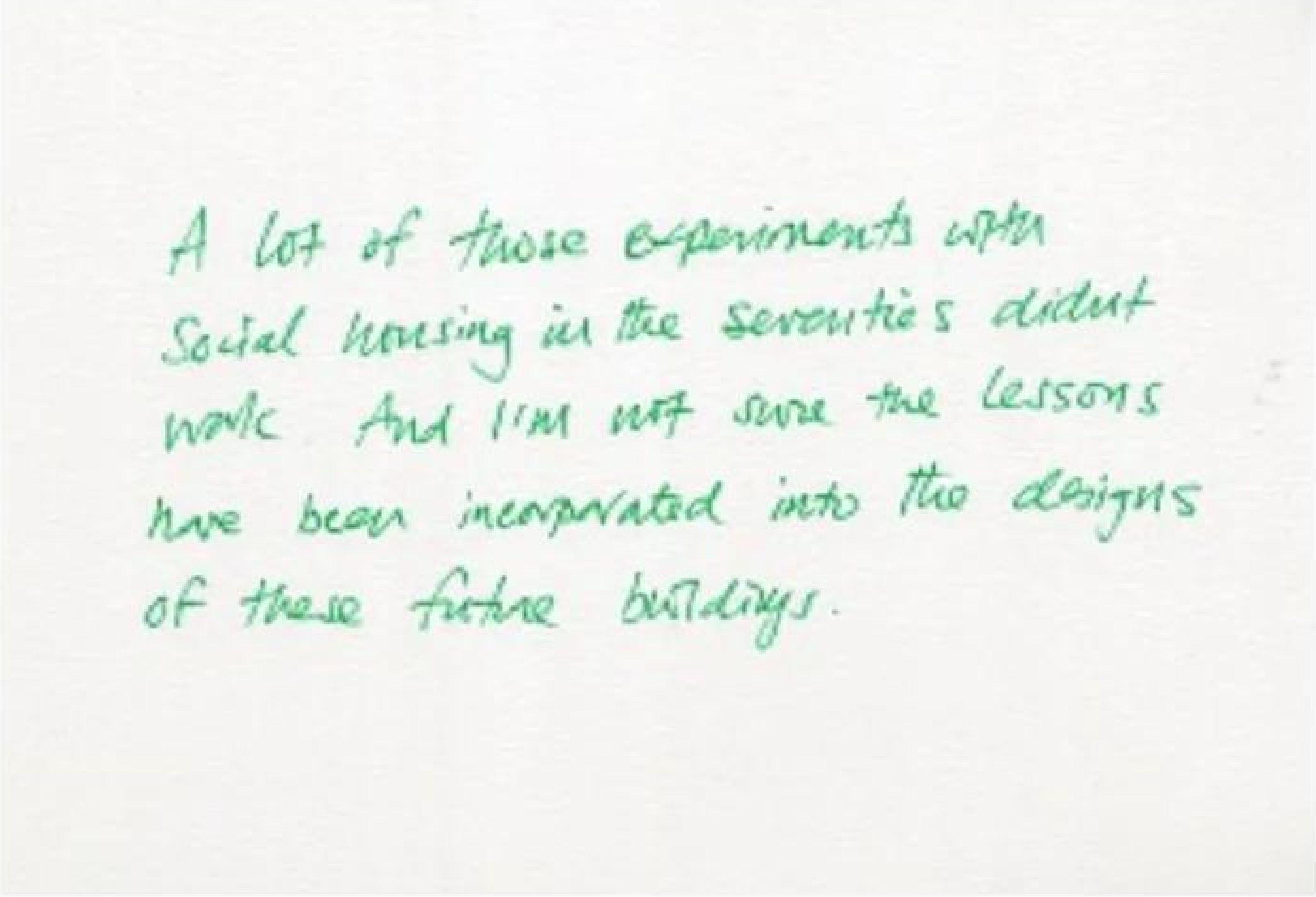
Social, affordable housing all comes under one banner because this is the facility given by the government to combat the housing crisis. They thought this is a better option than to build more houses themselves, but it's not.



£500,000 or £600,000 to buy a house in affordable housing. I'm a medic, I don't even earn £40,000. I cannot afford to buy a 2 bedroom house ~~at~~ £600,000. And if you've been born and brought up in London and now you can't afford to buy a house in London... and you say affordable housing, affordable housing for who? Because whoever builds the towers, they get the benefits. They're the beneficiary, not me. I'm paying over £2,000 a month rent here. Do you call that affordable housing?



I was born and brought up in this area. You know, I'm 50 years old, so I've seen 50 years the development around here. This was empty land. There was a road, one way street, and it's now a massive three lane road. The developers and the local government have betrayed us. Betrayed local people in the name of social housing.



A lot of those experiments with Social housing in the seventies didnt work. And I'm not sure the lessons have been incorporated into the designs of these future buildings.

Left: handwritten texts by Conditions of Living Community Forum participants

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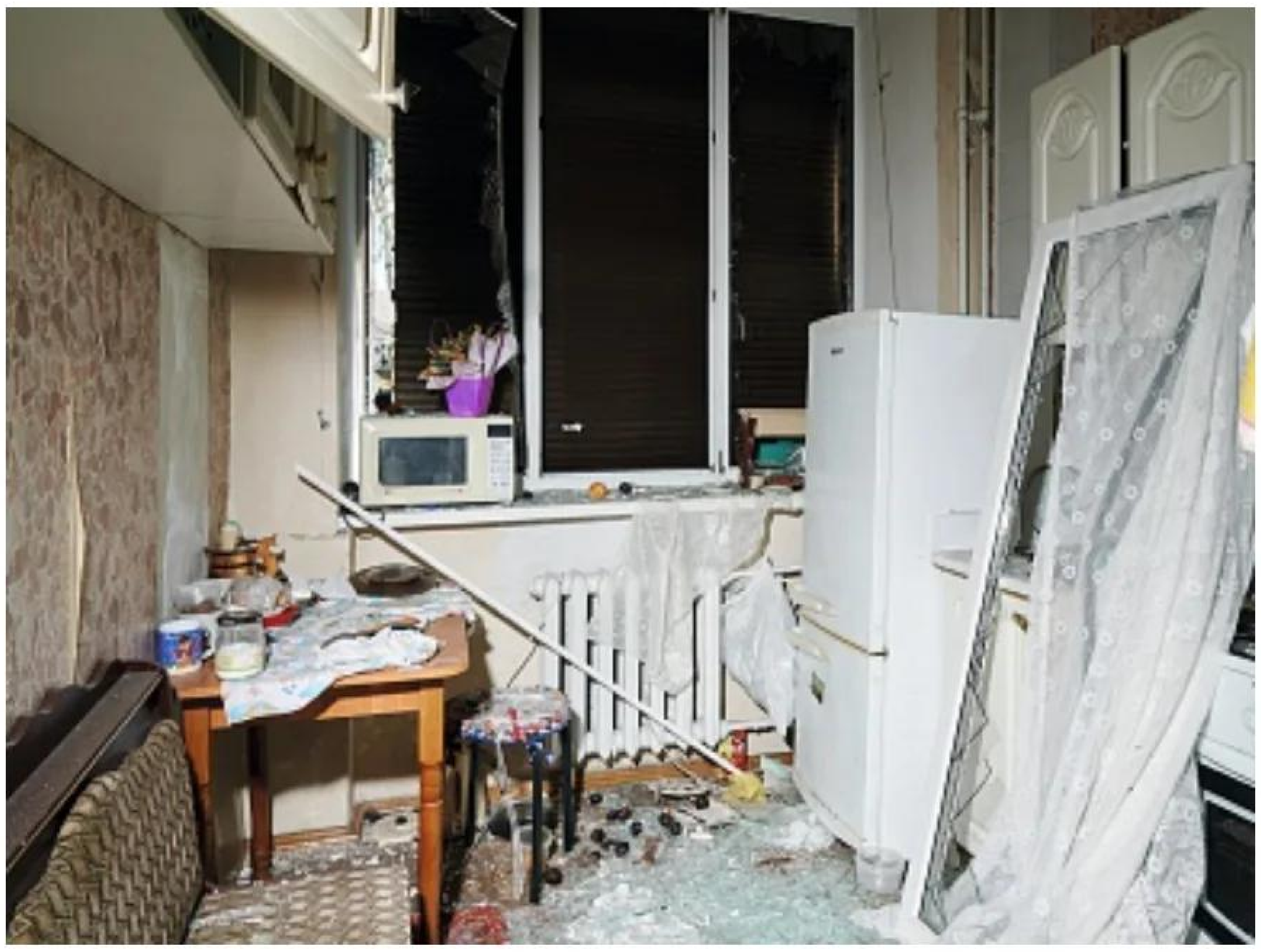
WAR ROOMS

BY CHRISTOPHER NUNN



© CHRISTOPHER NUNN

THESE PHOTOGRAPHS WERE TAKEN AROUND THE KHARKIV REGION of Ukraine immediately before and after the 2022 eastern counteroffensive that liberated thousands of square kilometres from Russian occupation.

Around this time I was working on the documentary film *Intercepted*, and the crew and I were staying in Kharkiv city, which was being frequently attacked. We encountered these spaces while filming around the city, as well as in smaller towns and villages in the region. Sometimes the people who lived there showed us inside, but most of the time these houses had simply been left abandoned.

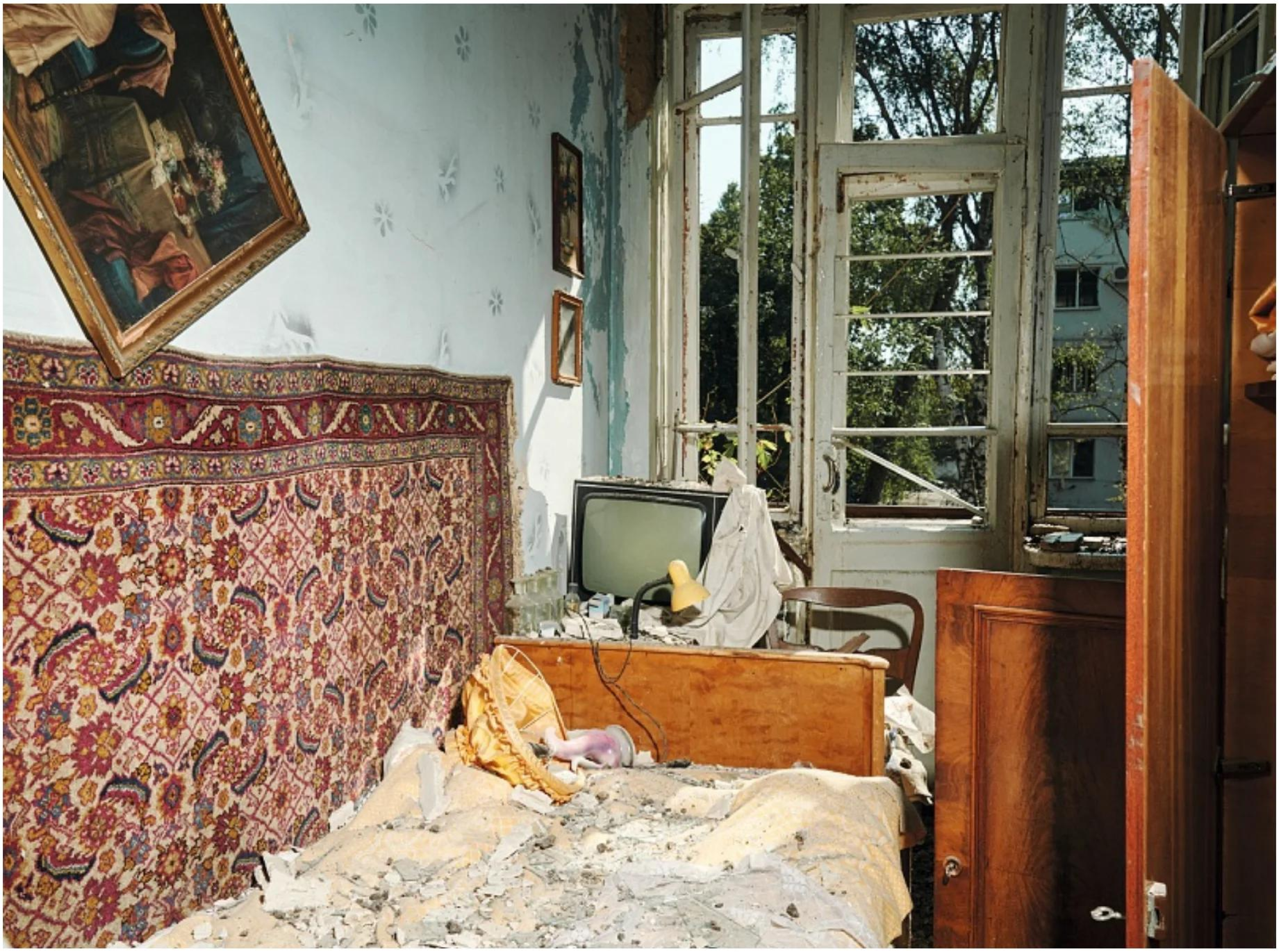
The photographs were taken quickly from an open doorway without disturbing the scene. In many cases the buildings weren't structurally safe, and in some of the towns that had recently been liberated the houses hadn't been properly checked for explosives or mines left by Russian forces.

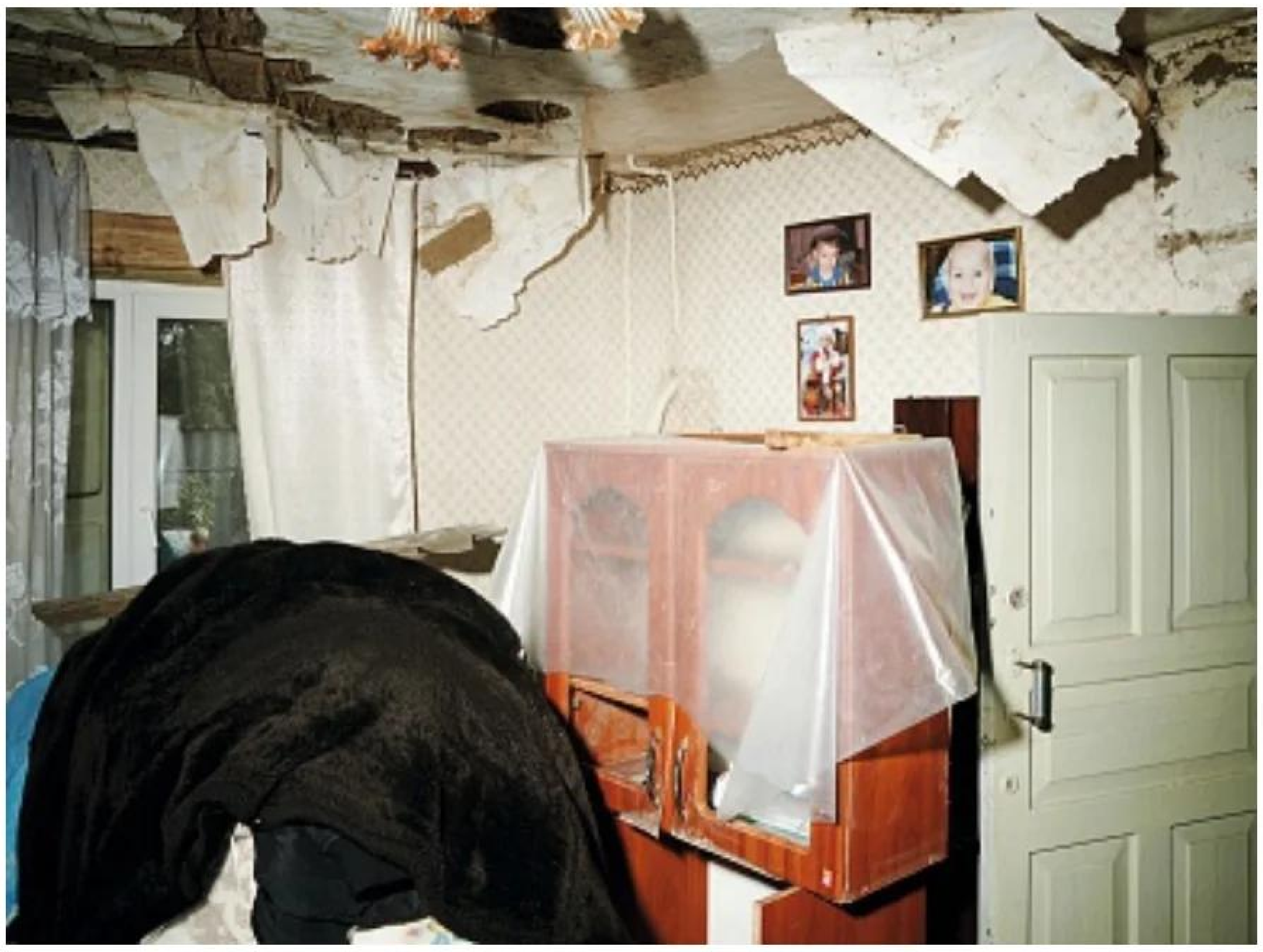
These domestic spaces have been transformed by conflict, whether by damage from missile strikes, ground combat, looting, military occupation or by the residents themselves surviving invasion. Within them we see remnants of past lives and traces of human behaviour, fragments of possible narratives among the chaos of Ukraine's deadly new reality.

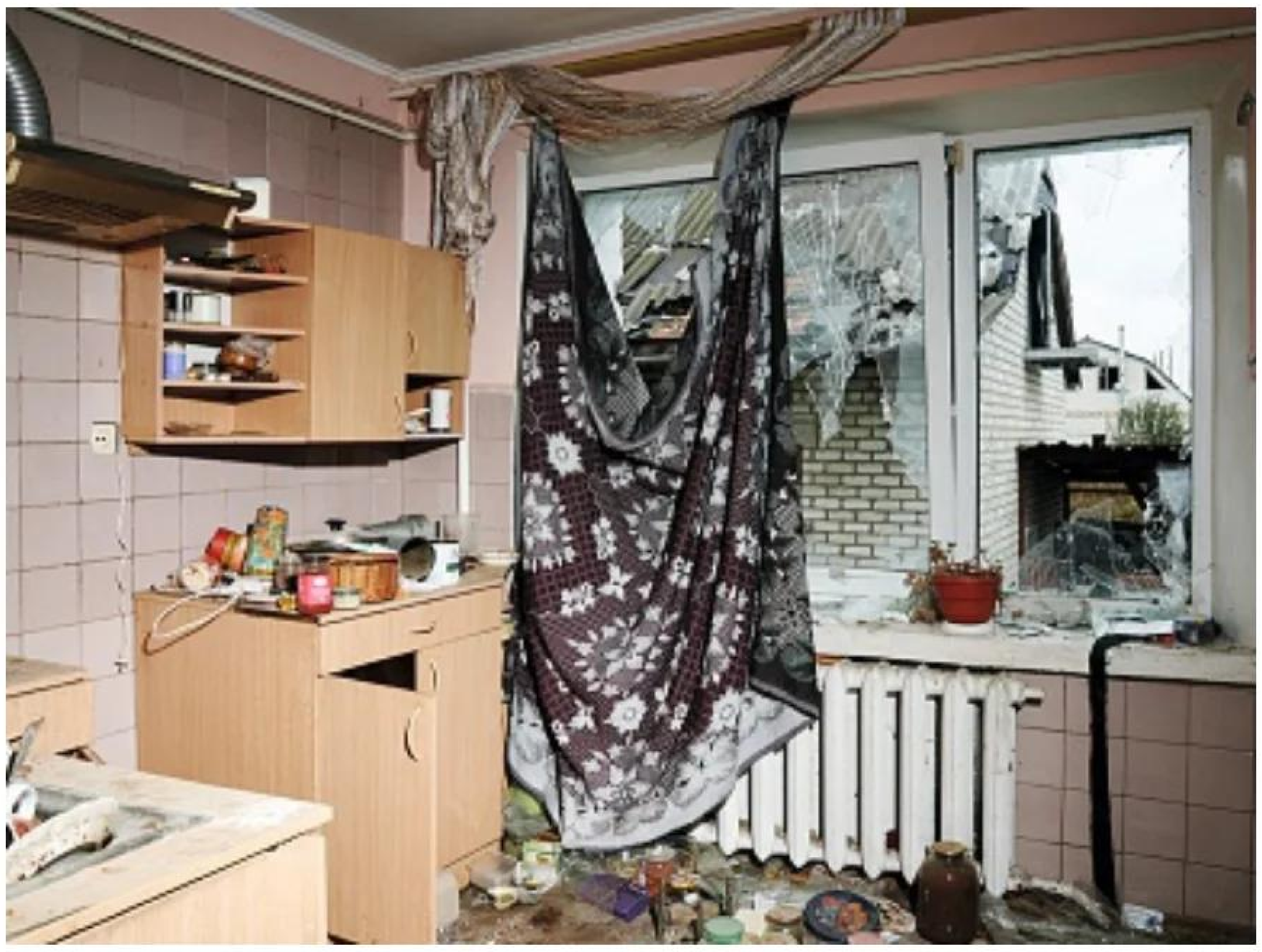
Further east, in the Donbas region, the scale of destruction is worse than anywhere else.

I've spent a lot of time here over the past decade, and have fond memories of countless birthdays, holidays and gatherings of family and friends around dining tables in rooms just like these. Almost all these towns are now destroyed, occupied or at the very edge of the ever-advancing frontline.

The idea of home is a frequent topic of discussion. Where is home and what does it mean when your house, street and city no longer exist? **FT**







Clockwise from top left: Kharkiv, 2022; Kharkiv; Verbivka, Kharkiv region; Kam’yanka, Kharkiv region

GIACOMETTI'S RURAL HOME

BY LILY LE BRUN

EXACTLY 60 YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE THE DEATH OF ALBERTO GIACOMETTI, YET his half-smoked cigarettes still lie abandoned among paint-encrusted palettes, sculpting tools, unfinished clay sculptures and an unmade bed, watched over by the life-sized portraits he sketched directly on to the walls of a dusty ground-floor room in Paris. In Montparnasse, close to where the original studio was, the Fondation Giacometti has faithfully recreated the tiny, chaotic space in which the artist lived and worked for 40 years. From this modest, messy place arose masterpieces; intensely observed paintings, and haunting standing figures that hold the record for the first, second and third most expensive sculptures ever sold.

Giacometti himself originally thought the studio would be temporary, referring to it as a "hole" or a "cave". Friends and contemporaries were similarly underwhelmed. The novelist Jean Genet had the impression that it was "made of worm-eaten wood and grey powder... Everything is stained and ready for the bin, everything is precarious and about to collapse." Giacometti's first biographer, James Lord, thought the place looked "as if it had been thrown together with a few old sticks and a lot of chewing gum... In short, a dump."

Yet he refused to move elsewhere, even after he married in 1949. Simone de Beauvoir admired his "very young wife for accepting this life". Noting their "desperate lodgings" and how "she does not have a winter coat and she wears worn-out shoes", she passed on to his wife Annette her hand-me-down clothes.

In the 1950s and 1960s, when Giacometti was having lauded retrospectives across the world, stashing the envelopes of cash and gold bars he'd earned under his bed, his working space remained much as he found it in 1926. Despite the increasing stream of visitors and admirers, he felt no need to change either the leaky roof, the muted light or the bare concrete floor, which had become lumpen over time with clay and plaster. "It's funny, when I took this studio... I thought it was tiny," he said. "But the longer I stayed, the bigger it became. I could fit anything I wanted into it."

Paris, however, was not Giacometti's only home. Increasingly, as he got older, he would return to his birthplace in a shady, secluded valley in the Swiss Alps. Taking a night train to Milan and a taxi from there into the mountains, he retreated to the house where he was born in the village of Stampa, or to his family's summer house in Maloja, in a higher, sunnier valley. Only a few people bridged these two existences: Annette, who he had met in Geneva during the war; Diego, his younger brother, who he worked alongside in Paris; and a friend, the Swiss photographer Ernst Scheidegger.

For many years, Scheidegger was the only photographer who was welcomed "*chez ma mère*" (Paris being "*chez moi*"). His pictures capture a world far away from the life Giacometti had forged for himself at the heart of the Parisian avant-garde. They show, for instance, the artist sitting beside some elderly neighbours and his mother, Annetta, who always refused to visit her sons in Paris. His mother's hair is a cloud of white; his is stormy grey. Their nose is the same shape, they share a similar slight smile, their faces are both etched with deep lines. Invariably, Giacometti is wearing a woollen suit, white shirt and plain dark-blue tie. Only in the fact that his tie is occasionally flecked with paint or plaster does this outfit betray that he is an artist.

Away from the monochrome of his Parisian studio, these pictures of Giacometti – many of which were shot in colour – have an air of contentment to them, a stillness. Sunlight streams through open windows, illuminating the hand-carved furniture and fruit and flowers collected for the table. Sculptures and paintings abound, but there is a sense of warmth, order and space. When Scheidegger has shot him at work, painting or sculpting a sitter, Giacometti's mouth is often slightly open, as though caught mid-conversation. The photographs speak of an atmosphere of trust arising not only from the closeness between artist and his model, which was nearly always someone familiar, but between the artist and the photographer too.

* * *

AS THE GERMANS APPROACHED PARIS IN 1940, GIACOMETTI buried his sculptures in the grounds of his studio and returned to Switzerland as soon as he could. Scheidegger, a charismatic 19-year-old art student on military service, was stationed in the almost deserted village of Maloja. One day in 1943, he knocked on the door of the Giacomettis' summer house – easy to identify due to the carved and painted stones that lay in front of it – and was introduced to the artist by his mother. Daily visits began, and despite their 20-year age difference, the two men became lifelong friends.

Scheidegger would go on to shoot for the Magnum photography agency and Gallery Maeght, gaining a reputation for his portraits of the leading artists of the day. Yet Tobia Bezzola, curator of the exhibition *Alberto Giacometti: Faces and Landscapes of Home* at Hauser & Wirth St Moritz, where Scheidegger's pictures are on show, believes these photographs of Giacometti in his homeland have a unique quality. "He was not there on assignment," he says. "He was not there in order to take photos. He was just there, near his camera." Scheidegger himself put it this way: "Giacometti was not a legend to me. My encounters with him, and the resulting photographs were of a more intimate, personal sort."

Apart from a headshot he took because his friend needed a passport photo – a brilliant picture that would end up on Swiss banknotes – Scheidegger most often shot Giacometti in motion: talking, drawing, sculpting, thinking. He noticed miscellaneous details about Giacometti's working environment: the paintings stacked in the corner; the bag of plaster chucked on the floor; the paint-covered stool beside his easel that carried matches, cigarettes and an ashtray. Together, they give an uncanny sense of what it must have felt like to really be there.

"Scheidegger becomes part of Alberto's inner circle, part of his Stampa world," says Bezzola, pointing out that he eventually bought a house in Stampa for himself. "Alberto liked keeping his two worlds apart. I always say he is bilingual, in a sense. He speaks one language when he is among Parisian intellectuals. When he's in Stampa, he speaks another. There, he's a son again. And there are some things you don't talk about with your mother."

⁂

BORN IN 1901, ALBERTO GIACOMETTI WAS THE ADORED FIRST child of Annetta and Giovanni Giacometti, himself a successful artist. Neighbours remembered the three younger siblings collecting water from an outdoor fountain: never Alberto. If he returned to Stampa as an adult, Annetta would move into her children's old bedroom and Alberto would take her larger room. When Alberto wrote to his mother to tell her he was going to marry, she wrote back to give her blessing to "this Annette No 2 who's brave enough to join such a mature companion. She's practically my double…"

Alberto often drew his mother, especially while she sat under the large light that hung over the family table, around which clustered carved wooden chairs designed individually by Giovanni for each child. This same warm light often appeared in paintings by Giovanni, a Post-Impressionist who had trained in Paris but made his name with domestic scenes and local landscapes. A gentle and loving father, Giovanni encouraged his children in the arts, especially Alberto – named after the German Renaissance artist Albrecht Dürer. Welcomed into his studio every day after school, the siblings learnt to paint and draw the places, people and objects that made up their daily existence. Alberto's brother Diego – named after Velázquez – would remain his principal model for the rest of his life.

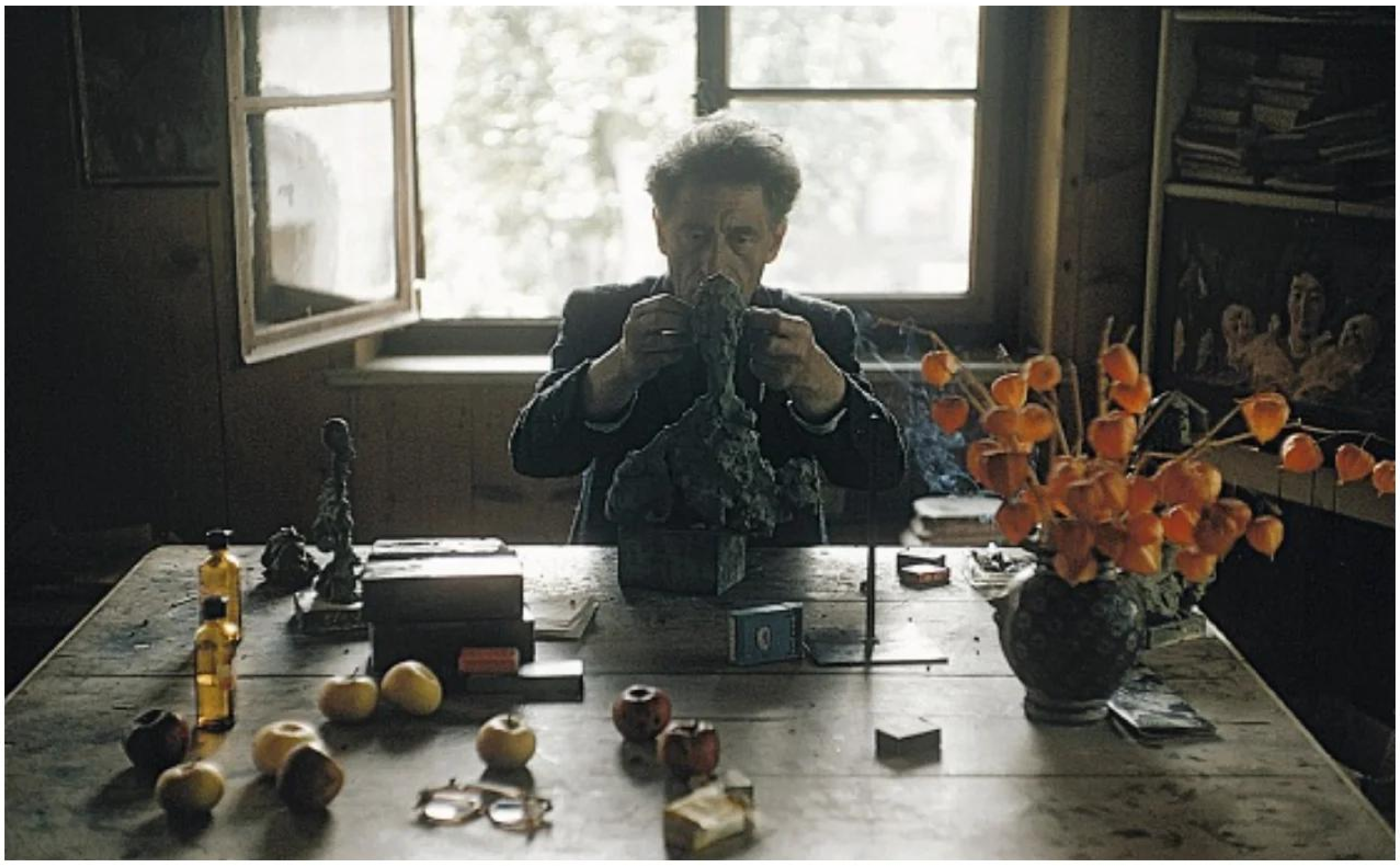
Like his father, teenage Alberto was impatient to leave the mountains. Like his father too, he became captivated by Paris when he moved there at the age of 20. He attended classes with the respected figurative sculptor Antoine Bourdelle for several years but soon became more interested by non-western art and progressive ideas. (His experiments with Cubism provoked from his tutor the response: "You can do that kind of thing in the studio, but you don't show it.") In the early 1930s, attracted by André Breton and the ideas of the Surrealists, Giacometti's gaze started to focus inwards, moving away from the representative tradition in which he'd been raised.

When Giovanni died in 1933, Alberto did not attend the funeral – Diego maintained that his brother was too distressed. He began to visit his mother more frequently, using his father's former studios in both Stampa and Maloja to work. He liked keeping close to the house, reading or drawing on the terrace or in the garden, hanging out in the local hotel that was once owned by his grandfather, chatting to old school friends and neighbours. He compulsively drew everything he saw around him, just as when he was a child. According to Scheidegger, "despite the fact he was often harshly criticised by his mother, Alberto was much more relaxed and happier with his work in Stampa than he was in Paris." In 1935, Giacometti was kicked out of the Surrealists for daring to work from the model again.

Of course, Giacometti is not remembered for the observational work that he made while in the Swiss mountains. It is the figurative motifs that surfaced from the dust of postwar Paris that most successfully stalk the present day. The walking man, the standing nude woman and the human head came to obsess him as he strove to distil human presence to its essence. The first standing figures – made during the war in a hotel room in Geneva – were small enough to transport in a matchbox. Back in Paris, they elongated like evening shadows.

Jean-Paul Sartre wrote about Giacometti's work several times, firmly allying his solitary, universal figures to the existentialist zeitgeist. But it was Samuel Beckett who perhaps had the closest affinity to his friend's postwar vision. "Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better," Beckett wrote. Less pithily, Giacometti explained, "Failure is my best friend. If I succeeded, it would be like dying. Maybe worse."

Something deep within Giacometti desired the edginess, discomfort and risk that Paris provided in abundance. Despite a phobia of the dark, he was (like Beckett) a self-described man "of the night". He would habitually sleep in the afternoon, work until midnight and haunt bars and brothels into the small hours. Sex workers were "goddesses", and the inspiration for the standing nudes. The contentedness that Scheidegger witnessed in Stampa was not – at least in the artist's own estimation – conducive to his best work. Even so, when Giacometti first grouped his sculpted figures together, he was surprised to find they most vividly evoked the tall, slender trees in "a corner of a forest that I knew well in my childhood".



Alberto Giacometti at his work table in Stampa, 1964

© SUCCESSION ALBERTO GIACOMETTI / 2025, PROLITTERIS, ZURICH PHOTOGRAPH: ERNST SCHEIDEGGER © 2025 STIFTUNG ERNST SCHEIDEGGER-ARCHIV, ZURICH

By the 1960s, Giacometti's embrace of failure had made him one of the most successful artists of his day. He worked constantly, sustained by black coffee, cigarettes and a sense that time was running out. In December 1965, two years after the death of his mother, he checked himself into a hospital in Switzerland for tests. Days later, he died of cardiac exhaustion. A few close friends, including Scheidegger, were with Giacometti on his final night in Paris. It was a strange evening, the photographer remembered. Conversation was stilted. "We resembled Giacometti's sculptures on a square: even though we were together, each was a being unto himself, not encountering the others."

Scheidegger helped with preparations for the funeral in Stampa. Giacometti's body was placed in the family house for a night and a day for people to say farewell. Scheidegger photographed the coffin, laden with wreaths of pine, occupying the centre of his father's old studio. It pushes up against the table at which he had worked since his youth, still covered with tubes of paint, charcoal, well-worn tools and an unformed lump of clay. All around, watching from the shelves, the sculptures of both boy and man keep vigil. FT

"Alberto Giacometti: Faces and Landscapes of Home" is at Hauser & Wirth St Moritz until March 28

RESIDENT ALIENS

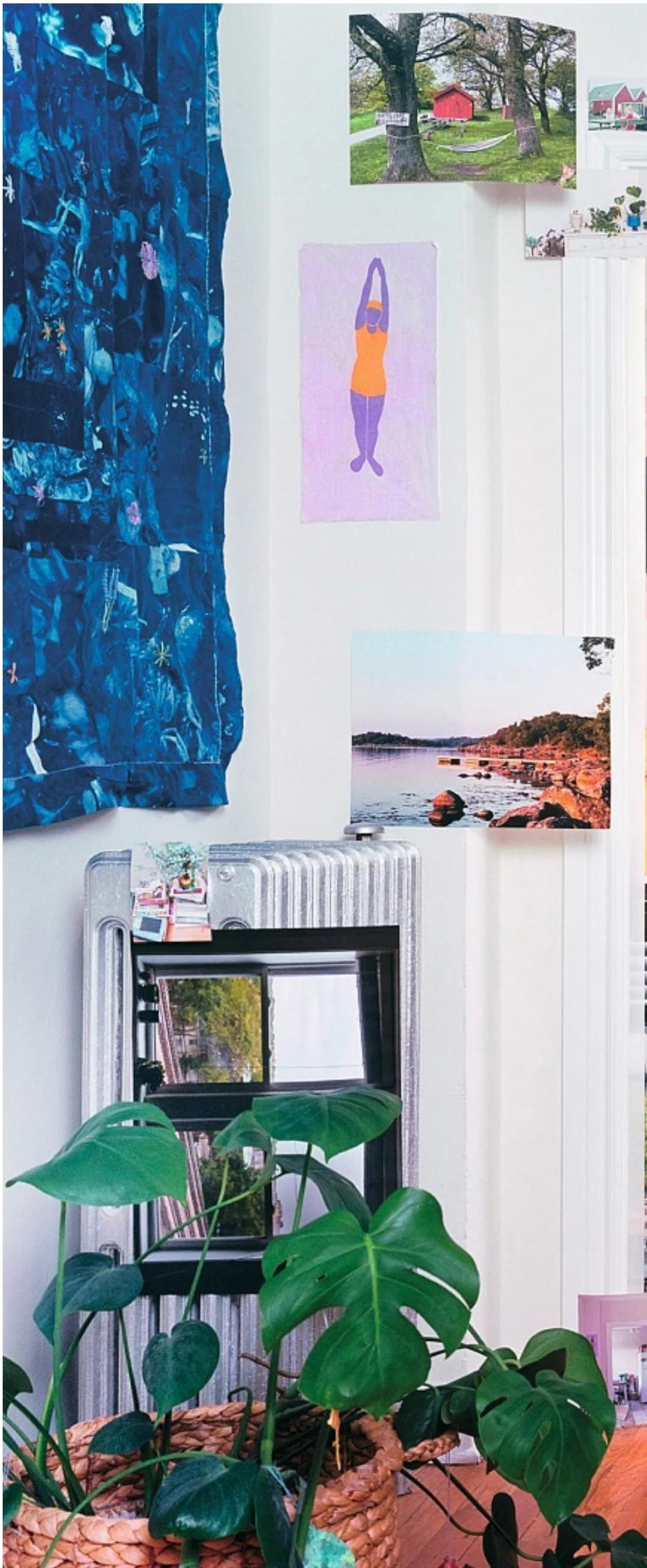
BY GUANYU XU

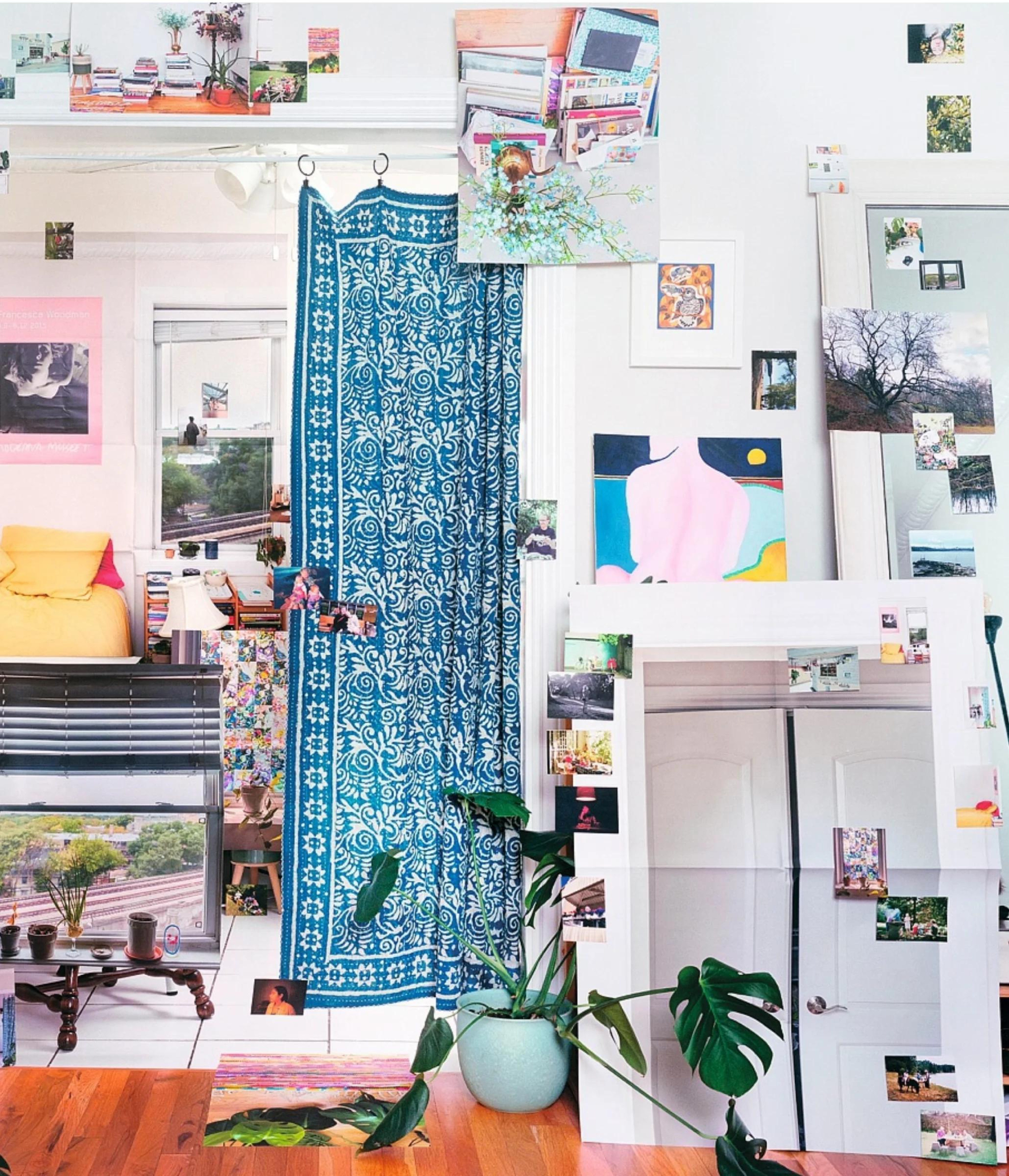
WHAT CONSTITUTES A HOME FOR IMMIGRANTS, AND HOW CAN photography counter the precarity produced by political systems?

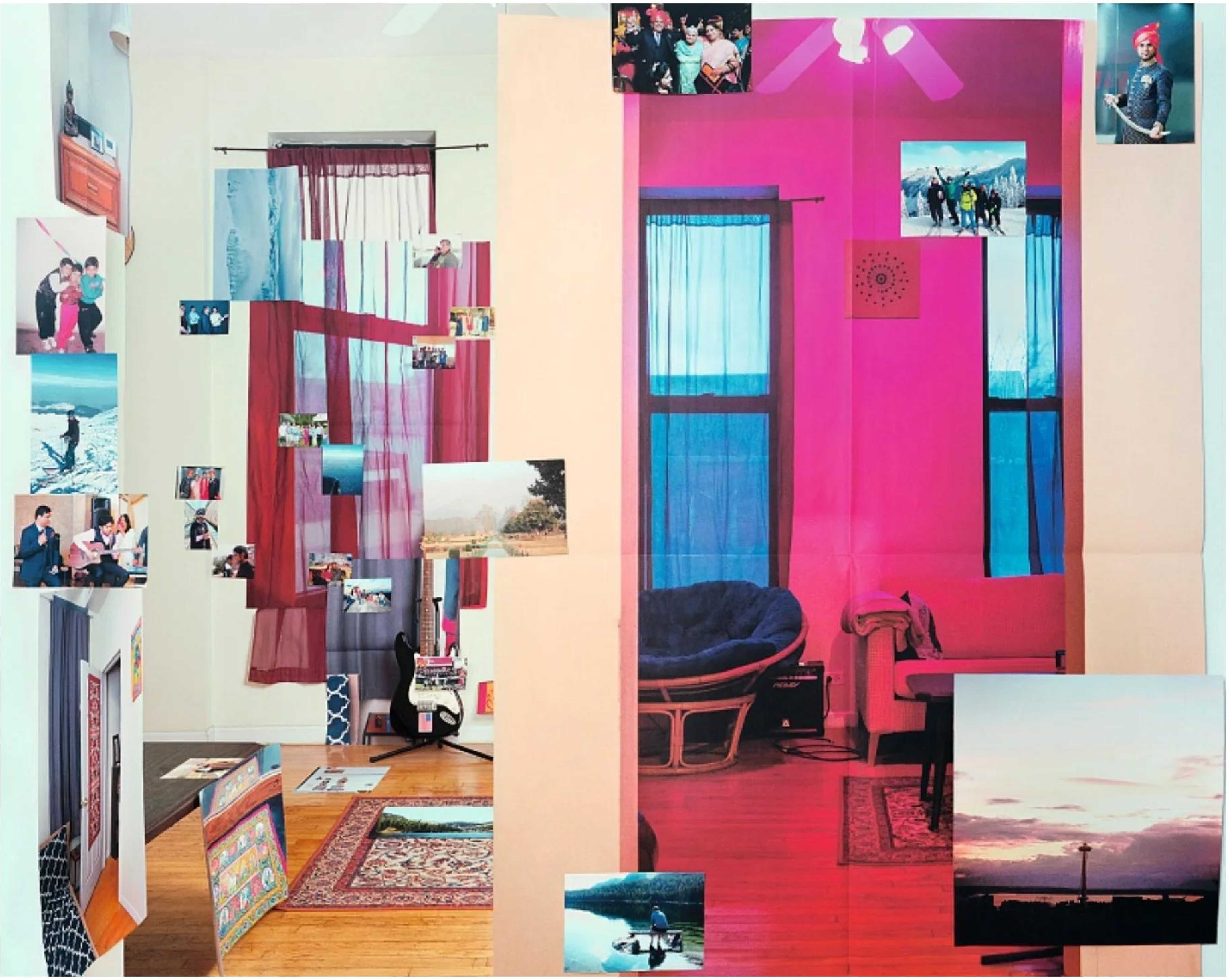
Resident Aliens presents physical photographic installations within immigrants' interior spaces to examine their personal histories. By photographing layered arrangements of domestic environments, belongings, personal archives and images made by my collaborators across the world, the project blurs the boundaries between familiar and foreign, public and private, belonging and alienation. The work felt particularly urgent to make, set amid the global rise of neo-nationalism.

Since 2020, I have collaborated with more than 40 individuals living in Chicago, East Lansing, New York, Hong Kong, Beijing, Nanjing and Shanghai. Participants come from a wide range of countries and regions, including Brazil, China, Colombia, Egypt, Germany, India, Israel, Malaysia, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden and the United

Right: 'RK-08282018-01142022', 2022




Francesca Woodman



States. The project seeks to create diverse representations of immigrant legal statuses and living conditions, and I continue to expand its geographic scope to include additional perspectives.

Collaboration is central to the project, functioning as both a social and artistic practice. Through sustained conversation, I work with participants to represent their layered identities. Entering their domestic spaces as an outsider, I transform these often temporary environments into site-responsive installations, which are then preserved through photography.

Bringing together ideas about the temporality of photography, of immigration status, and of identity, the project emphasises the contradiction inherent in representation, both photographic and legal. The result is situated somewhere between photography, installation and performance.

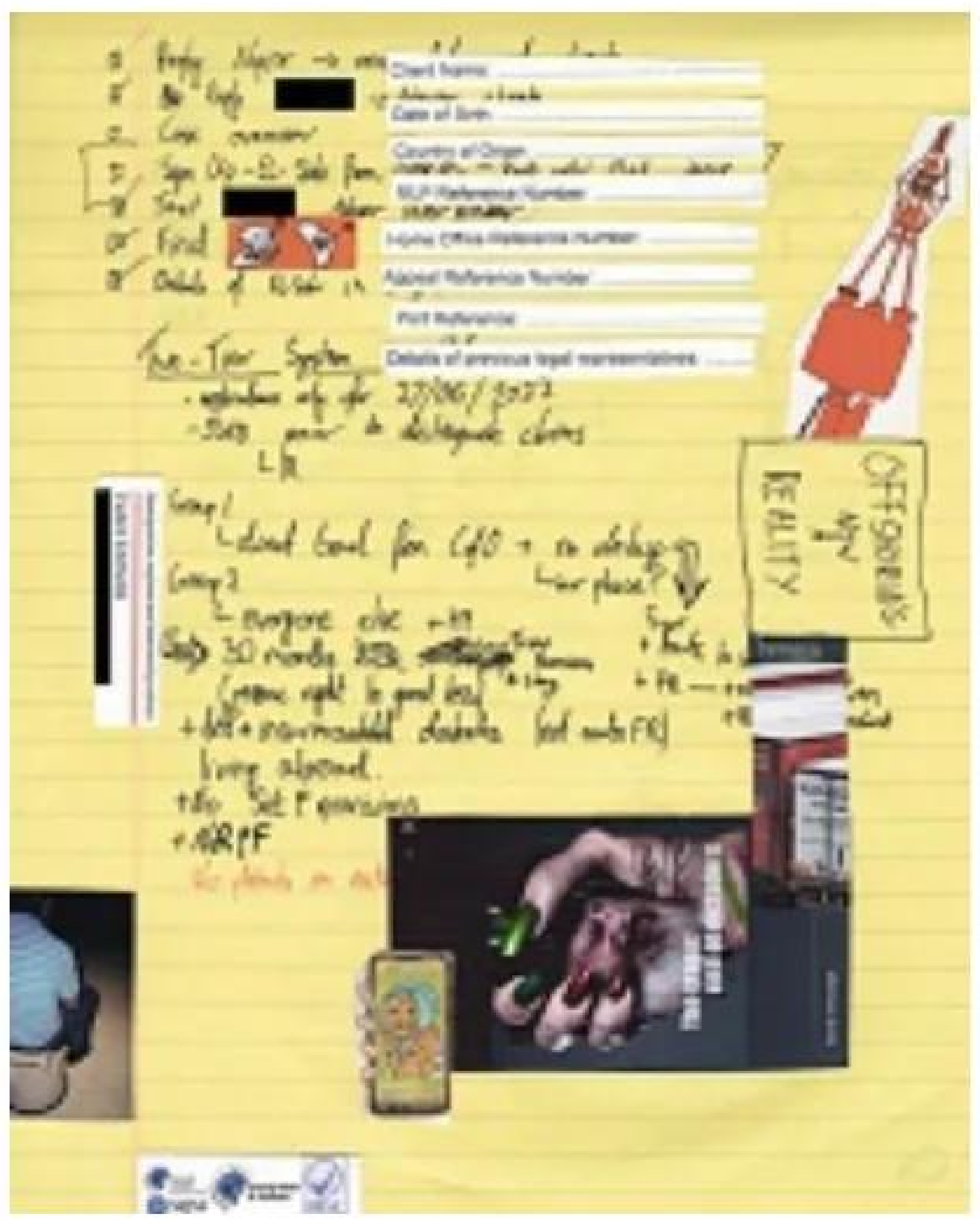
I want to ask: in this interconnected world, how do we redefine citizenship and the legality of a person? FT

Above: 'AK-08102008-05032021', 2021

© GUANYU XU

A REASONABLE DEGREE OF LIKELIHOOD

BY TUDOR RHYS ETCHELLS



IMMIGRATION LAW DECIDES WHO CAN SETTLE IN THE UK AND CALL IT home. It is one of the most complicated areas of legal practice. I worked in the system for eight years as a lawyer for asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants. For the final three, I attempted to document a bureaucracy that remains hidden to most. In my role, I had to mediate my client's reality by questioning their traumatic experiences in order to construct a narrative to present to the Home Office. I became concerned with my own position as a legal representative, which led me also to question who can be photographed by whom and the power dynamics of those interactions.

To me, the photograph and the law are both frameworks for negotiating evidence, belief and knowledge. I was, and remain, frustrated by the sensationalist imagery used to represent those fleeing persecution, both in news stories and by documentary and fine art photographers. By turning the camera to the brutal mundanity of the legal structures that determine their lives, I encourage the viewer to question the law itself.

Backlogs meant that my clients were stuck in limbo, often hundreds of miles away from me and other legal representatives, in remote coastal towns of England and Wales. This temporary accommodation, as well as my own office, was where the absurdity of unending administrative demands played out.

The photographs themselves became spaces of dark humour, a coping mechanism for those entwined in the system. I adopted a visual language designed to mock the attempts of documentary photography to represent truth. By putting myself in front of the camera, I acted out the contradictions of performing for the system, against the system and as the system. By breaking the fourth wall, I wanted to subvert photographic and legal portrayals of truth. In refugee law, you must prove that there is a "reasonable degree of likelihood" of harm upon being returned home. In the photograph, there is no burden of proof. FT

Clockwise from top left: 'Untitled 2', 2022, 'Self-Portrait as Young Legal Aid Lawyer', 2022, 'With immediate effect we are no longer undertaking Legal Aid Agency funded work', 2022, 'The Third Policeman', 2023, 'Offshoring as Reality', 2022

© TUDOR RHYS ETCHELLS

FROM HOME

DISCARDED FRUIT

BY KALPESH LATHIGRA

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AT FIRST THE CAMP APPEARS AS COLOURS AGAINST THE DUST. THEN, LIFTING my gaze, I see plastic, orange tarpaulin, clothing bleached by the sun. These are hues that suggest people have already stayed too long.

It is 2013, and I am on commission for UNHCR, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, documenting their work at the world's largest refugee camp, Za'atari in Jordan, where Syrians have been seeking refuge since 2011 when the Syrian conflict began. What was meant to be temporary has become something else. Not quite permanent, but closer to that than temporary. The site now has paths that feel more like roads. A street is jokingly called the Champs-Élysées.

The title of the series *Discarded Fruit* refers to one image from the refugee camp which shows fruit that is overripe, bruised, on the turn – not waste quite yet, but something removed from circulation. People in Za'atari exist in a similar condition: not destroyed, or erased, but paused, held at the edge of usefulness by a world uncertain what to do with them next.

I am taken back to my own family's history. Nim, my wife, is a refugee, as are all her family. That word "refugee" stings. It has been stretched, appropriated, dulled. I now speak instead of people seeking refuge. Nim and her family were displaced from Uganda by Big Dada, Idi Amin, in 1972, when the dictator expelled Uganda's Asian population. We regularly pore over what photographs remain in Nim's family albums. This is where the memories of the displaced live.

In Za'atari an economy grows. On the main boulevard, hair is cut and meat is sold. Phones are repaired and weddings take place. Commerce does not signal recovery, it signals refusal. People insist on living even as the future remains abstract, indefinitely deferred. I am mesmerised by the people here.

I eat Syrian lunches and drink sweet tea, trying to cross my legs on the floors of their homes. They are my uncles and aunties, my brothers and sisters. That is my experience. Their traditions are mine; we are the same and this could have been me, it was Nim.

"The Lives We Dream in Passing" is at NCPA, Mumbai, India from February 12

© KALPESH LATHIGRA

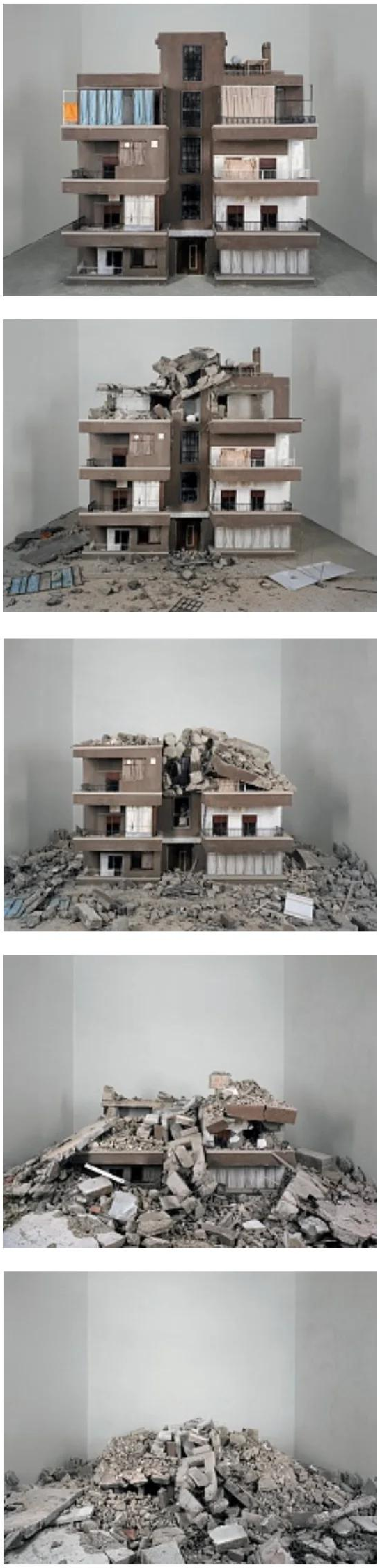
HOMESICK

BY HRAIR SARKISSIAN

I MADE "HOMESICK" IN 2013-14, AT A TIME THE WAR IN SYRIA WAS escalating. My parents were refusing to leave Damascus. They were still living in the apartment I had grown up in, and where I had lived until I left Syria in 2008. Obviously most importantly it was the place that housed and sheltered my parents (my father has since passed away, but my mother is still living there today). In addition it was, and still is, the place where I feel I belong, a container for my memories and a place for my family's collective identity. At the time, I was constantly in fear of what could happen: to my parents, to my history, to my country. The pre-emptive destruction of the house became a vessel for that fear. I recreated an architecturally exact scaled concrete model of the apartment building, a little over 2m high, and documented myself destroying it with a sledgehammer. It took me seven hours. The resulting video is built up of photographs taken after each hit. You don't see me, so all that is visible is the building slowly imploding, accompanied by the sound of my hits.

Like in much of my work, this project is not just about the space, but about the emotions and histories invested there. While my work often deals with traumatic events that happened before in a place but are now invisible, this project addresses the very real possibility of a loss before the event. I channelled all my rage, my fears and my feelings of hopelessness enacting a worst-case scenario in order to gain some control over the situation. Looking back, a little over a decade later, a lot has changed, but the work is still as relevant as ever. The fear of what could happen to our homes, to our existence, is still an ongoing nightmare for many. FT

"Stolen Past" by Hrair Sarkissian is at Ibraaz, London from March 25, ibraaz.org



'Homesick', 2014
Two-channel video installation

© HRAIR SARKISSIAN

THE HOUSE WE BUILT. THE CITY WE MAY LOSE

BY RAJA SHEHADEH

IN 2019, I WROTE OF RAMALLAH, THE CITY WHERE I WAS BORN AND HAVE LIVED *most of my life, in my book "Going Home". In the extract reprinted here, I imagined a time when "the city itself ceases to exist, whether through war or natural disasters, and then it is as though it never ever was". When I wrote these words these possibilities seemed remote and only possible in the distant future. Now after the massive destruction I have witnessed in Gaza, and the Israeli practice of destroying homes in Jenin, Tulkarem, Nur Es Shams and other places in the West Bank, which has rendered some 42,000 Palestinians homeless here, the possibility of such destruction in the city of Ramallah is no longer too remote.*

With the restrictions on movement that Israel has imposed in the West Bank since October 7 2023 we have spent more time in our house than at any time previously. How often during this time have we thought how lucky for us that we built a comfortable house with a garden where we can spend a lot of time and not feel too confined.

Raja Shehadeh, Ramallah, December 2025

⁂

For a long time I resolved not to build a house of my own for fear of getting too attached to it and then losing it in this unsettled land of ours, ending up spending the rest of my life lamenting its loss, as happened to my parents. It was only after the Oslo Accords were signed between Israel and the PLO in the mid-1990s, and the confusion and chaos that came in their wake, that I decided I needed a place to which I could retire at the end of the day, a place of order and tranquillity.

Our decision to build our own house in Ramallah turned out to be one of the best decisions my wife, Penny, and I ever took. We found a good-sized plot at the edge of town in the Tireh quarter on a quiet street north of the city and began planning. As it was going up, we would walk to the site in the afternoon and enjoy seeing the house materialise stone by stone.

It is traditional to place in the foundations some precious metal as an omen of future prosperity; instead we decided to write on a parchment how we wished our life in the house to be lived, rolled it up and inserted it into a pipe, which we buried. Will anyone read what we wrote at some future time? I very much doubt it. If this should happen, I wonder what they will think of us. But we didn't mean it for posterity. The foundations of our house with the buried script of hopes must by now have become enmeshed within the roots of the lemon tree we planted in the middle of the courtyard. Or perhaps with those of the three olive trees in the backyard that are sure to outlive us. Everything else will die except those resilient trees. Most likely, the text of our aspirations has returned to nature, as our bodies will some day.

In the bedroom we built a walk-in wardrobe. My wardrobe is a museum spanning decades. Because I've remained the same size and haven't gained weight for years, I can still wear many garments, yet I rarely do. I am tempted to believe that, like my city, my wardrobe – the various shirts, suits, hats or ties – is a repository of what I've tried to be. Some of my father's clothes are still here. They are so much him that my mother could not throw them away. She gave them to me, hoping that I would wear them, though I could never bring myself to. I'm a hoarder and have a hard time throwing away any possession – especially clothes that remind me of other periods of my life.

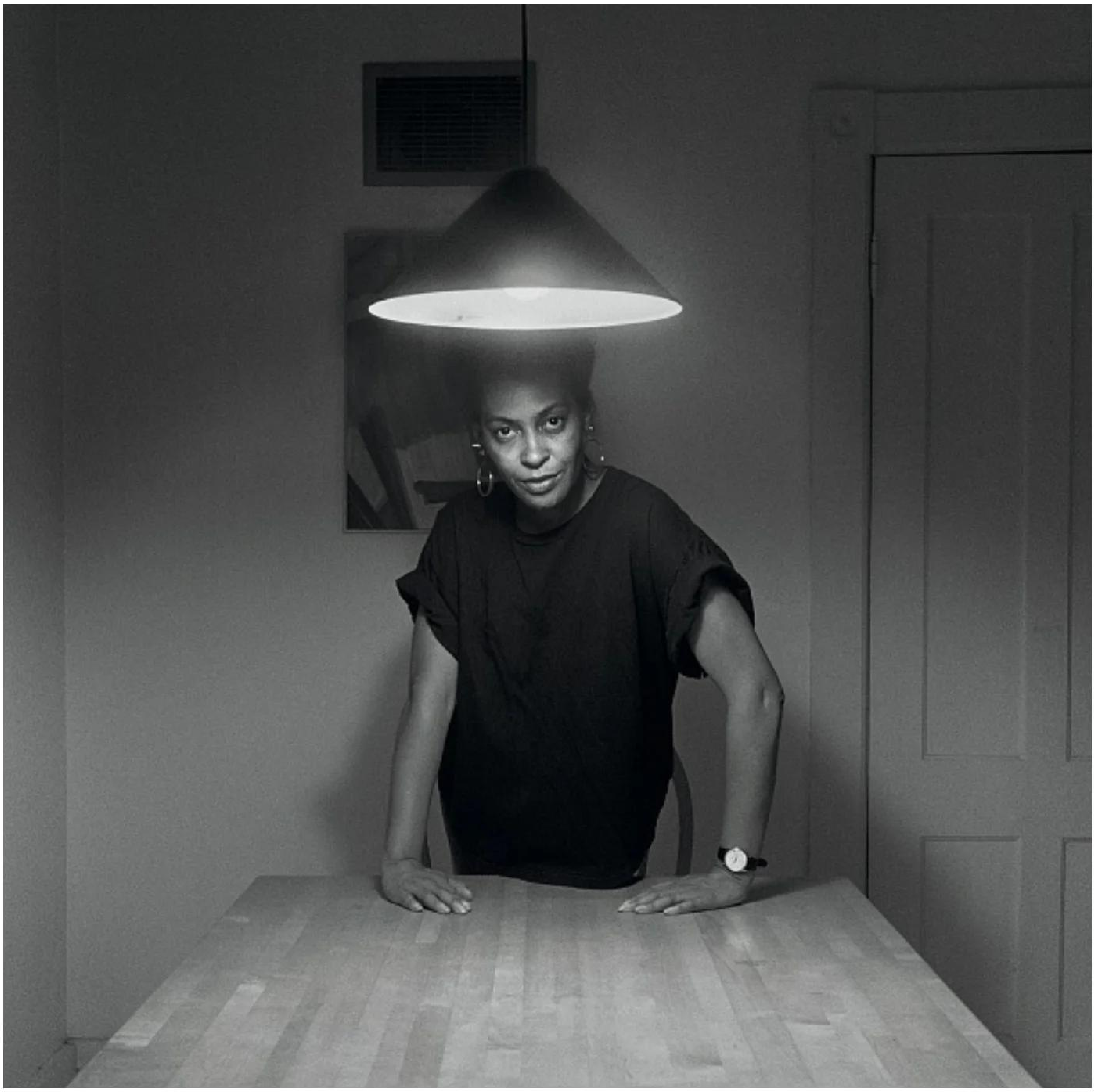
Clothes are like houses, objects we cover ourselves with and often dwell in so as to create an impression for others and not just for the comfort they provide. My different lives are represented by the different clothes I have worn, as by the homes located in different parts of the city where I have lived. To this day I have my writerly clothes and my lawyerly ones, some from when I started my career 37 years ago – shirts, belts, trousers and jackets. Like our bodies, our houses and our clothing are but sparks of our existence, our self, which we inhabit for a while and make our own. Then we leave them and the connection is severed.

Clothes wear out and houses are sold to other owners or fall into ruin, and the city continues as if we were never there. Until the city itself ceases to exist, whether through war or natural disasters, and then it is as though it never ever was. Barring some political or natural calamity, Penny and I hope to spend the rest of our days in this house. And yet, despite this long-standing attachment, I continue to be troubled by a recurring dream in which, for what feels to be an agonisingly long time, I search for but cannot find my home. For someone who has lived the majority of his life in the same small city, who owns a property in it, to feel in my subconscious that I'm bereft of a home is a strange affliction.

Raja Shehadeh is a Palestinian writer, lawyer and human rights activist. "Going Home: A Walk Through Fifty Years of Occupation" was published by Profile in 2019

KITCHEN TABLE SERIES

BY CARRIE MAE WEEMS



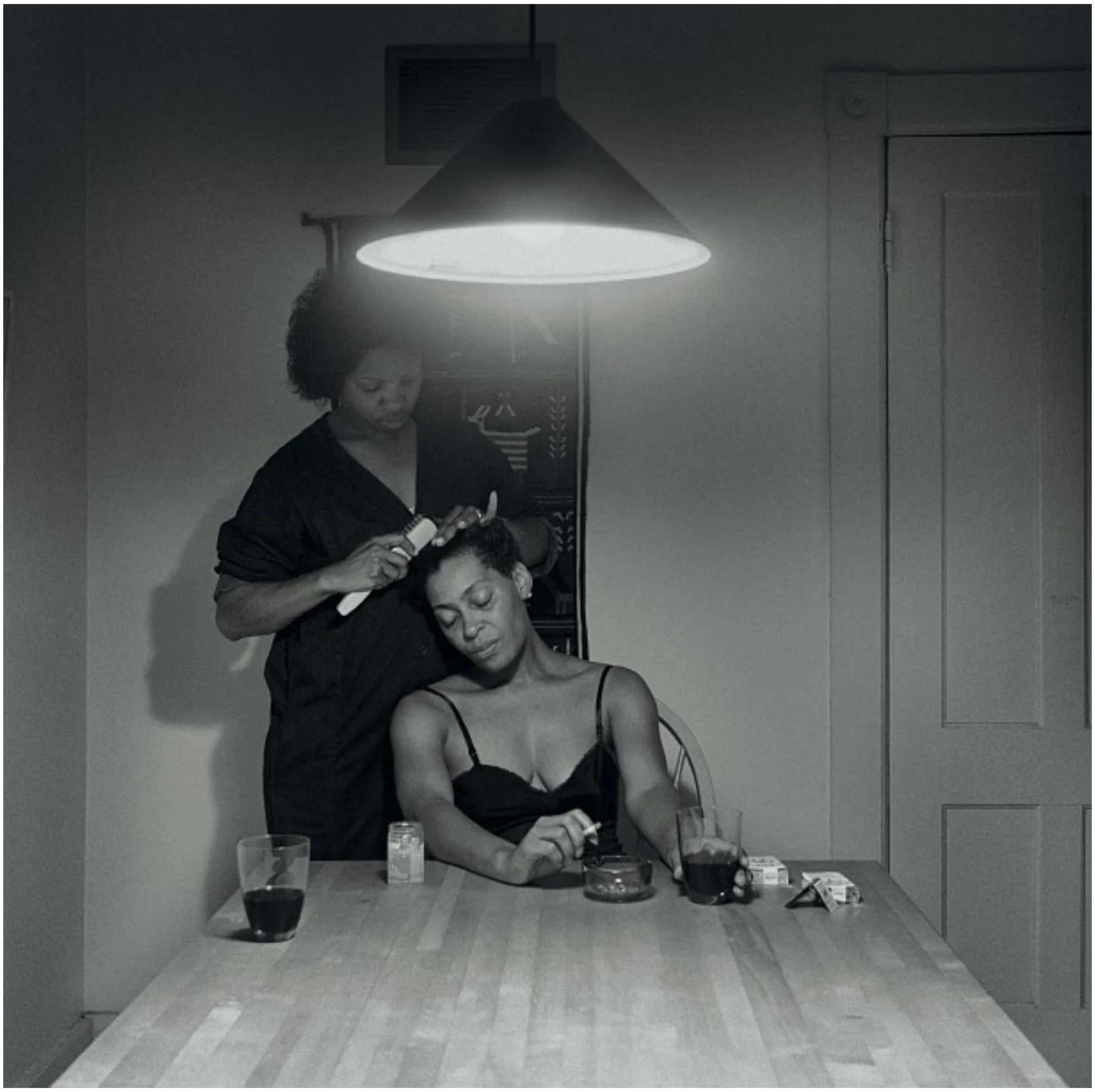
FOR THIS 1990 SERIES, CARRIE MAE WEEMS STAGED AND PHOTOGRAPHED a fictional drama in which she plays the lead. The setting is always the same: a small room with a table and a single overhead light. Other cast members play lovers, friends and daughters.

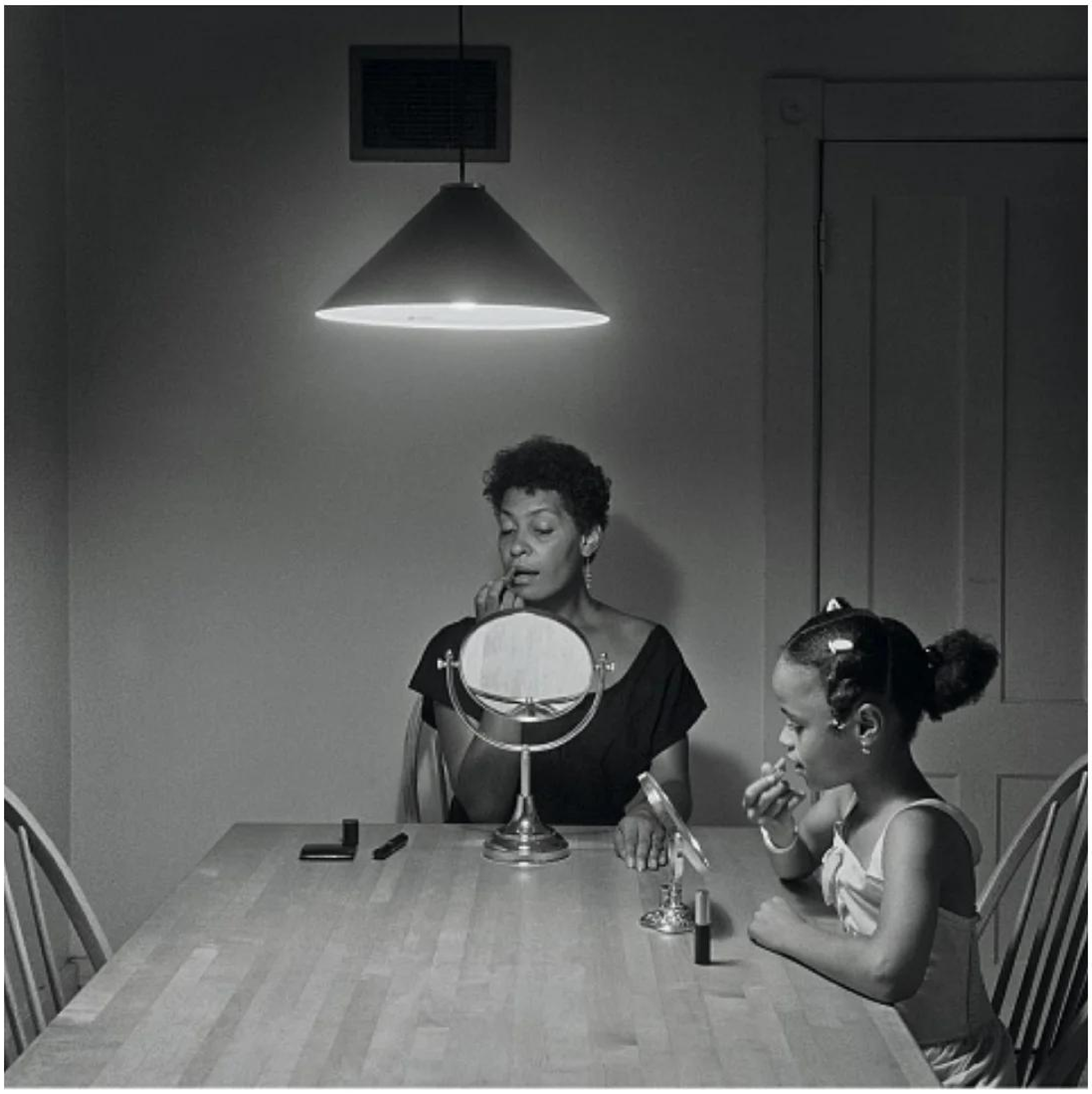
From this modest setup, the artist creates an entire world. The kitchen, traditionally considered a female space, has rarely been pictured as a site of importance. Weems turns this idea on its head. She suggests the kitchen table is the stage where life's biggest moments play out, and where the full range of human emotions is expressed.

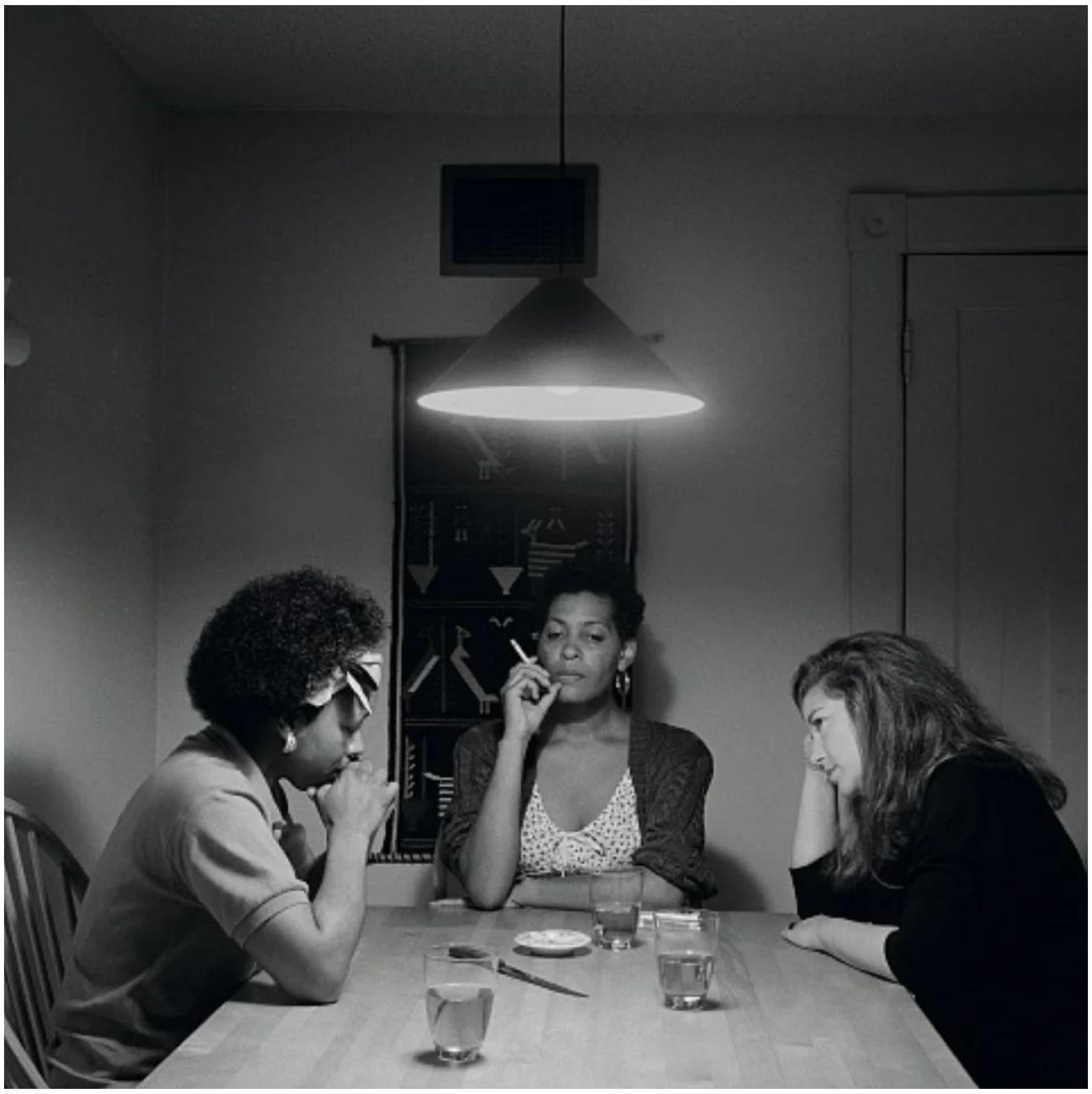
The series compellingly examines women's lives. It boldly asserts, in particular, Black womanhood's complexity, strength and beauty. Reflecting on it in an interview in 2017, Weems said: "I think the images are more current now than ever before, and I'm still very much aware of the ways in which women are discounted. They're undervalued within the world generally, and within the art world in particular. I think it's one of the reasons that the series still proves to be so valuable, or invaluable, to so many women, and not just Black women, but white women and Asian women; and not just women, but men as well, have really come to me about the importance of this work in their lives. I find it remarkable." FT

Carrie Mae Weems presents "Contested Sites of Memory" at the Lincoln Center, New York, on January 29-30. "Carrie Mae Weems: Something Grander Still" will be at AGBS at the University of Texas at Austin from January 30-May 9. "The Heart of the Matter" is at FOMU Antwerp from March 20-August 23 before travelling to C/O Berlin from September 12

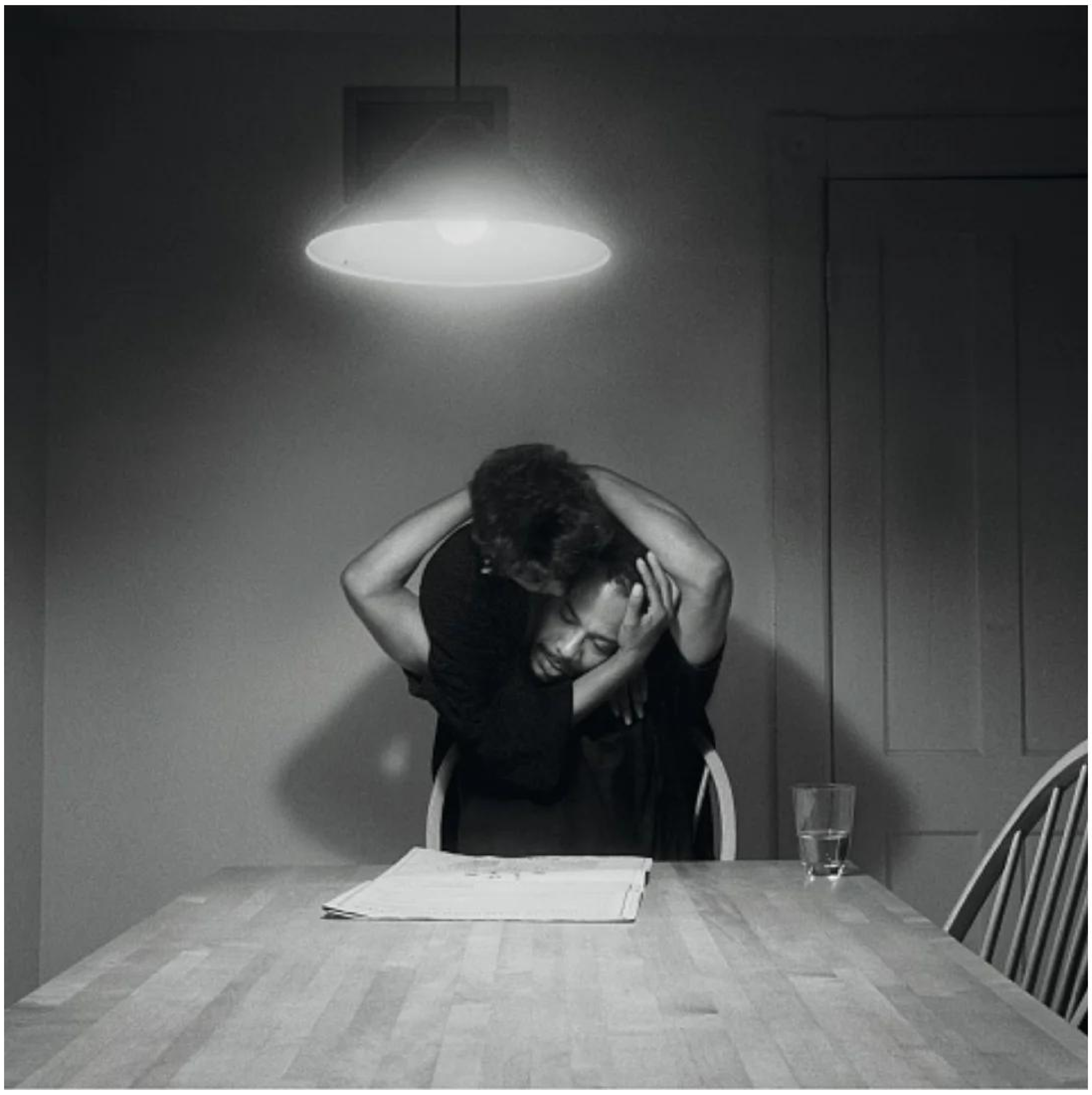
Left: 'Untitled (Woman Standing Alone)'
Right: 'Untitled (Woman Brushing Hair)'

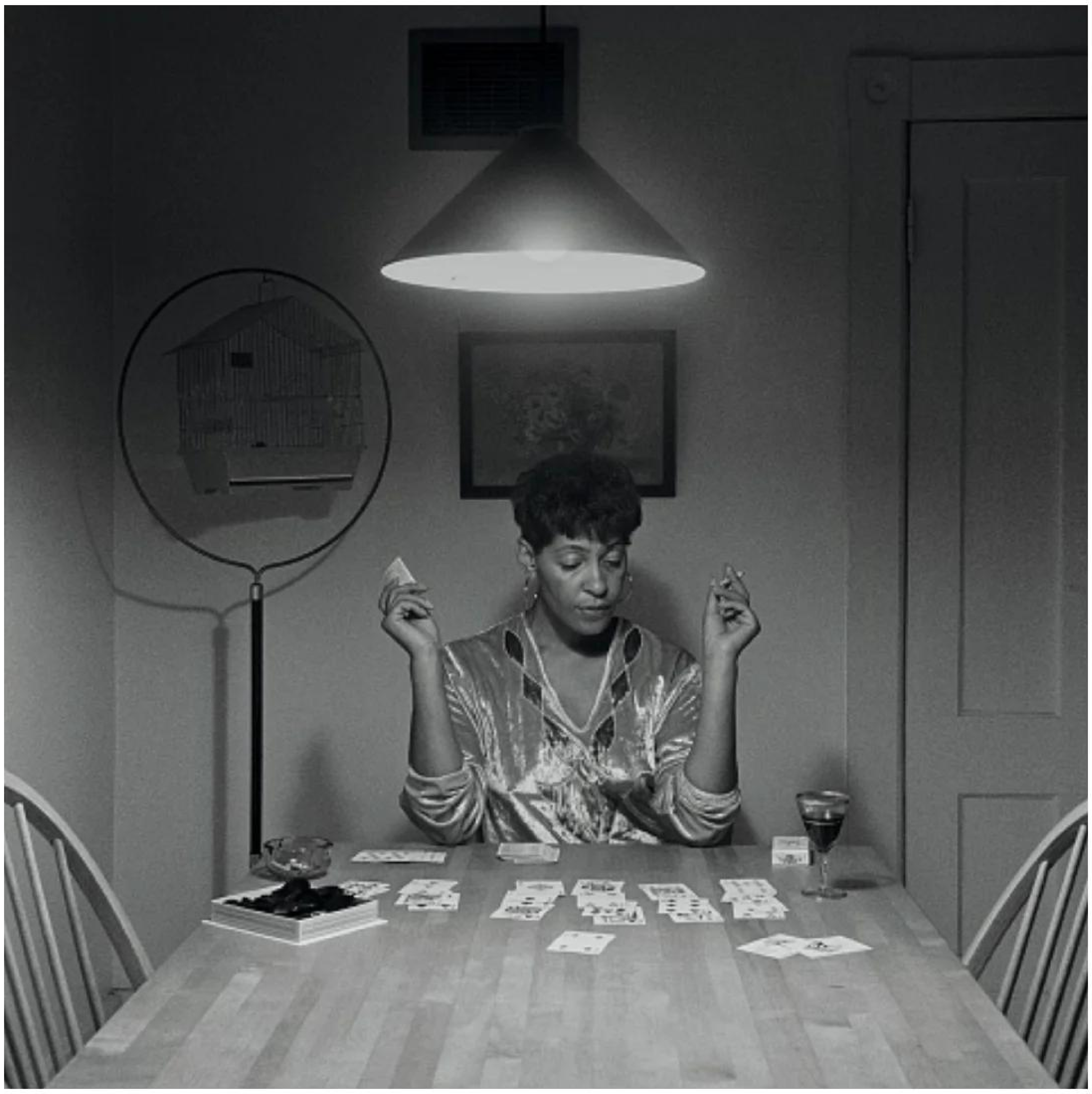






Above: 'Untitled (Woman and Daughter with Make-Up)'
Left: 'Untitled (Girlfriends Triptych 2)'





Above: ‘Untitled (Man Reading Newspaper Triptych 3)’
Left: ‘Untitled (Woman Playing Solitaire)’

© CARRIE MAE WEEMS. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND GLADSTONE, NEW YORK, FRAENKEL GALLERY, SAN FRANCISCO, AND GALERIE BARBARA THUMM, BERLIN

ONE BED, TWO BLANKETS, EIGHTY-FIVE RULES

BY SABINE HESS & NICOLAS POLLI

WE – NICOLAS AND SABINE – MET EACH OTHER IN 2021 IN VALLE VERZASCA at a photography festival in the south of Switzerland. We shared conversations, shy smiles, cheap beers, and what would later become the first of a long list of kisses. Coming from two different regions of Switzerland and living in two different countries, this place offered us a platform for exchange and togetherness.

The day after, with a slight hangover, we drove home together – and never really left each other's side again. Although we continued to live in different places, we managed to preserve the initial connection found there.

Two years later, in 2023, we decided to move in together – or at least to give it a try. This marked the beginning of our first collaborative photography project, *One Bed, Two Blankets, Seventy-Six Rules*. Starting with an artistic residency, we took time to test our compatibility in living together. In a humorous and experimental way, we played with the norms and expectations surrounding our perception of a "relationship". This approach allowed us to create a playful yet vulnerable body of work, in which we confront both the joys and the struggles of learning how to share a space with each other.

The photographs are accompanied by a set of rules on how to live together more harmoniously. By bringing together these two elements – photography and text – we created a book. After the initial residency, we continued to work on the project, adapting it over time as our relationship evolved in the following years. The most recent edition, exhibited at Peckham 24 last year, was titled *One Bed, Two Blankets, Eighty-Five Rules*. FT

"One Bed, Two Blankets, Eighty-Five Rules" is published by Ciao Press

BUY TWO BLANKETS FOR ONE BED

© SABINE HESS & NICOLAS POLLI

DO NOT START A SERIOUS DISCUSSION BEFORE THE FIRST COFFEE OF THE DAY

BUILD AN ORGASM AS YOU BUILD A HOUSE, NOT TOO FAST AND USE YOUR HANDS IF NEEDED

SUPPORT YOUR PARTNER IN DEVELOPING THEIR OWN DREAMS

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Appetites

CLASS
OF
1870

Wine

Madeira, the wine that lasts a lifetime

by JANCIS ROBINSON

ILLUSTRATION *by* DEBORA SZPILMAN

A horizontal wine tasting is not what you might think. It's a comparison of similar wines from a single vintage year, as opposed to a vertical tasting, which examines the same wine over several different vintages. In most horizontal tastings you expect a few disappointments. There will inevitably be some underperformers, especially if the vintage in question is fully mature – not all wines evolve gracefully.

But a long-awaited tasting that finally took place last October, after many a stop and start, proved an exception and well worth the wait. (It was first proposed in 2019 but delayed by lockdowns.) This particular horizontal tasting was of wines that were 150 or 155 years old. And, of the 18 wines in question, only one was in anything other than peak condition. This was nothing short of miraculous.

Wine geeks will already have guessed what the wines were: madeira, the longest-lived wine of all, and one that, so usefully, remains hale and hearty in an opened bottle for as long as it takes you to finish enjoying it. Nor do bottles need to be

JANCIS RECOMMENDS

MADEIRAS

DRY

- **Blandy's 10 Year Old Sercial NV Madeira (19%)**
  £32.95 FAREHAM WINE CELLAR, £34.95 THE WHISKY EXCHANGE, £148 FOR SIX TURVILLE VALLEY WINES
- **Justino's 10 Year Old Sercial NV Madeira (19%)**
  £42 QUERCUS WINES
- **Pereira D'Oliveiras Sercial 2013 Madeira (20%) Bottled 2024**
  £55 IN BOND BERRY BROS & RUDD, £79.95 PERFECT CELLAR
- **Blandy's, Colheita Sercial 2011 Madeira (20%)**
  £390 FOR SIX 75CL BOTTLES IN BOND VINQUINN

MEDIUM DRY

- **Henriques & Henriques 5 Year Old Verdelho NV Madeira (19%)**
  £17 FOR 50CL HIGHBURY VINTNERS
- **Henriques & Henriques 10 Year Old Verdelho NV Madeira (20%)**
  £22 FOR 50CL TANNERS
- **Barbeito Verdelho Single Cask Agostino Vineyard 2007 Madeira (19.1%)**
  £63.50 FOR 50CL CORK OF THE NORTH
- **Barbeito, Rainwater Lote Especial NV Madeira (19.1%)**
  £68.50 FOR 50CL CORK OF THE NORTH

MEDIUM SWEET

- **H M Borges, 10 Year Old Boal NV Madeira (19%)**
  £39.95 THE WHISKY EXCHANGE, £46.83 CLARK FOYSTER
- **Henriques & Henriques, Medium Rich Single Harvest 1998 Madeira (20%)**
  FOR 50CL: £33.99 THE WINE RESERVE, £41.95 FOR BACCHUS N4 WINE, £42.98 ALEXANDER HADLEIGH
- **Blandy's, Colheita Bual 2011 Madeira (20%)**
  £89.95 THE WHISKY EXCHANGE, £90 VINQUINN
- **Blandy's Bual 1994 Madeira (20%)**
  £250 TURVILLE VALLEY WINES, £178 IN BOND VINQUINN

SWEET

- **Blandy's 10 Year Old Malmsey NV Madeira (19%)**
  £24.99 FOR 50CL TAURUS WINES, £29.50 VINTAGE WINE & PORT, £34.95 THE WHISKY EXCHANGE, £32.95 FAREHAM WINE CELLAR, £39 CAMBRIDGE WINE MERCHANTS, £40 HEDONISM
- **Justino's 10 Year Old Malvasia NV Madeira (19%)**
  £42 QUERCUS WINES, £43 GRAPE MINDS
- **HM Borges Tinta Negra Doce 2015 Madeira (20%)**
  £46.11 CLARK FOYSTER
- **Barbeito Malvasia Single Cask San Jorge Vineyard 2009 Madeira (19.2%)**
  £62.50 FOR 50CL CORK OF THE NORTH

FOR TASTING NOTES AND SCORES SEE JANCISROBINSON.COM. INTERNATIONAL STOCKISTS ON WINE-SEARCHER.COM.

PRICES CORRECT AT THE TIME OF WRITING

stored horizontally in order to keep the cork damp. Bottles of ancient madeira are quite happy to be stood upright forever since, unusually for wine, exposure to oxygen poses no threat.

This collection of ancient madeiras (15 1870s and three 1875s) had been assembled by, as you may imagine, a keen madeira enthusiast. He began collecting them more than 40 years ago when, as he puts it, "they were dirt cheap because no one else was interested". Having previously been unacquainted with our host, and knowing how many fake, or at least incorrectly labelled, madeiras there have been on the market, I was a little wary when initially approached to lead the tasting. So I sent the list to British madeira expert Paul Day who approved of it, identifying most of the wines as having come from an impeccable source, the late Patrick Grubb who retired as head of Sotheby's wine department to concentrate on rare madeiras.

Day also gave detailed advice on exactly when to open the bottles and how to prepare them. He advised opening them a full two days in advance. Our host, enlisting the help of hardworking local sommeliers, decided to open all the bottles just before the first of two tasting sessions on consecutive mornings so that we could compare the effect of opening the wines an hour or two and 24 hours in advance. (Day was right; the wines were even more expressive at the second session.)

Our host's wife had prepared an illustrated book detailing what was happening in 1870. The Franco-Prussian war had just begun. The term Impressionism had yet to be coined. Charles Dickens died. Lenin was born. But on the Portuguese island of Madeira, 1870 was a particularly significant vintage. The characteristically tiny vineyards had by now recovered from a devastating outbreak of powdery mildew in the 1850s. But demand for madeira from across the Atlantic, once hugely significant, had shrunk as a result of the American civil war in the 1860s. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 had further diminished the island's wine trade because far fewer ships called in there.

There are all too few madeira producers left on the island

But worse was to come. The dreaded vine root-munching phylloxera insect arrived on the island in 1872 and was even more destructive. Vineyards disappeared in favour of the many other crops such as bananas that flourish on this fertile island, and farmers replaced the classic, pale-skinned grape varieties with the hardier, dark-skinned Tinta Negra. The result was a severe shortage of grapes such as Sercial, Verdelho, Bual, Malvasia, Terrantez and Bastardo and, with no wine regulations in place in such an isolated corner of Europe, the approach to labelling became casual to say the least.

So our 1870s fitted neatly between two viticultural scourges and, with the exception of a Sercial described as Ricardo Vasconcelos Wedding Vintage, gave the assembled 15 tasters (a number that allowed generous pours for everyone from a 75cl bottle, even one with a lot of sediment) a great deal of pleasure. Thanks to madeira's naturally high acidity, we also rose from the tasting table feeling refreshed rather than clobbered by the alcohol.

FIRST SIP

A MADEIRA PRIMER

With embroidery and Cristiano Ronaldo, wine is one of the most famous products of Madeira, the volcanic Portuguese island 250 miles north of the Canary Islands in the Atlantic. Madeira is made, like sherry and port, by adding alcohol to the grape must so that the wines are generally almost 20 per cent alcohol, before they are aged in cask. But madeira's distinction, inspired by what happened to it historically during long sea voyages in the tropics, is that it is deliberately exposed to heat. This adds depth of flavour to its natural tanginess and explains why it is so robust.

Traditionally madeira was sold as a varietal wine, named after the grape variety from which it was made. These were the four classic varieties, presented in ascending order of the usual sweetness of the wine made from them:

- **Sercial** Very high acidity and sometimes a certain almond flavour. Suitable as an aperitif.
- **Verdelho** A bit fuller and slightly sweeter than Sercial, it can develop a smoky character. Versatile.
- **Bual** or **Boal** Definitely rich and darker.
- **Malmsey** Darkest and sweetest of all. Great with nuts or cheese.

Today there is a chronic shortage of these pale-skinned grapes, which is why the majority of madeiras are blends based on Negramoll.

Most of them are labelled Dry, Medium Dry, Medium Sweet or Medium Rich, and Sweet or Rich, to vaguely correspond to the four traditional styles, often with an indication of age, such as five or 10 years old.

Madeiras from a single vintage are quite rare today and are labelled Colheita or, for wines aged in cask for more than 20 years, Frasqueira.

Of the 18 wines we tasted, three were not entirely from the 1870 vintage but were instead labelled 1870 Solera, meaning they were blends in which the oldest ingredient was an 1870. Interestingly, one of the group's two favourite wines (and mine) was Blandy's Verdelho Solera 1870. The other group favourite was a wine served blind at the end, D'Oliveiras Malvazia Reserva 1875 bottled in 1999. My other personal favourite was another Verdelho Solera 1870, from Leacock & Co.

Fortunately, I have had two opportunities to wallow in my desert island wine since that October tasting. The first was while tasting for my column on sweet and/or strong wines for Christmas. The second was a generic madeira tasting in London. There are all too few madeira producers left on the island so it was no surprise that only six of them were represented.

This is partly because, as on that other popular holiday island Santorini in Greece, it is so much more financially attractive to sell land for development than to farm vines. As a result, there are only a few hundred hectares of vineyard on the island. And the situation is exacerbated by the shortage of traditional grape varieties with familiar names.

Nowadays you can be sure that a wine labelled, say, Verdelho really is Verdelho, but the great majority of modern madeira is made from Tinta Negra, also called Negramoll. Despite being planted on a good 80 per cent of all Madeira vineyards (and widely in Spain's Canary Islands), the variety doesn't have the same reputation as the old classics and is only starting to be seen on labels, although Ricardo Diogo Freitas of Barbeito and HM Borges have made some serious madeira from it. It is also the basis of the increasing proportion of table wine produced on the island.

The upshot of all this is that madeira of any quality or style is, justifiably, expensive – especially relative to the port and sherry produced in infinitely greater quantity. Blandy's is the dominant producer, owned by the family who have staked their fortune on many other aspects of the island's economy. Chris Blandy has taken the wine company in hand and repackaged its 10 Year Old classic bottlings so that they now look extremely handsome, and have a recommended retail price of £39.99 (although they can be found for less). Blandy's Colheitas, again from each of the four classic grape varieties and currently 2011s, are priced at £90 a bottle, no more than a classed growth claret of more or less the same age.

Quite apart from the quality of the wines listed here, I particularly enjoyed one aspect of the generic madeira tasting. When writing tasting notes, I usually have to try to work out a suggested drinking window. In the case of madeira, I can instead cheerfully write "drink anytime".

Review

2210 by NattyCanCook and RapChar, south London

by JAY RAYNER

ILLUSTRATION *by* DANIEL EGNEUS

A restaurant with a knotty backstory is good for the appetite. We like the idea that a menu is more than just a rackety collection of dishes; that it represents something generously seasoned with the personal. On either side of Brockwell Park in south London two restaurants have opened, both exploring the food of the Caribbean. Both successfully challenge assumptions of what a Caribbean restaurant must be. Both have a compelling backstory. But happily, compared to the vigour and ambition of the food, those stories are not the most important thing about them.

The most recent opening of the two is 2210 by NattyCanCook, on a broad site overlooking the park from its southern edge. The eponymous chef Nathaniel Mortley, who has Guyanese, Bajan and German-Jewish heritage, grew up in nearby Peckham where ragged teenage energy was eventually redirected into kitchens, with the encouragement of his beloved Guyanese grandmother; the 2210 of the restaurant's name commemorates the date she died. Those kitchens included tough, high-end ones, at some of which drugs were common. Mortley drifted into dealing and ended up serving two years in jail, some of it at Brixton Prison just on the other side of the park. There, he became involved with The Clink, the charity-run

FIND IT

2210 BY NATTYCANCOOK

75 Norwood Road,
London SE24 9AA
020 3713 5108
2210bynattycancook.com

Starters £5.50–£12.50
Mains £24–£42
Desserts £11–£12

RAPCHAR

30 Brixton Water Lane,
London SW2 1PE
020 3793 8928
rapchar.com

Starters £11.50–£15.50
Mains £25–£35
Desserts £4–£9

restaurant providing training to prisoners and for whom he is now an ambassador. But, as he has said in interviews, his is not a story of redemption found at the stove. Cooking was already his thing. Prison just focused him.

This is his first restaurant, and the mark of the serious kitchens in which Mortley slogged to get here is obvious. Watch him at the pass. There is a precision to his plating, and pleasing swirls to his sauces, which employ occasional French technique. What matters is the intense flavours he pursues, many of which draw on the Indian influences on Guyanese cooking. But he doesn't engage in culinary contortionism to make something fancy out of the everyday. There is still a brow-moistening kick.

There are warm, flaky roti to dip into a thick scotch bonnet butter, with a gentle push on the heat so the flavour comes through. Alongside them are cumin-spiced bhajis made with carrot and plantain, up to their deep-fried knees in a rich coconut velouté, each topped with a thick spring onion emulsion worn like a jaunty hat. A block of confit pork belly, the meat tumbling apart, the crackling still with its vital snap, is piled under vinegary red cabbage slaw and served with a pork jus and mayo boosted by more scotch bonnet. A whole brill is expertly trimmed and plated so that it swims in another ocean-deep, Indo-spiced coconut and plantain sauce. With this there is the obligatory rice and peas and, with a nod to Peckham's Nigerian community, a musky, rust-coloured jollof rice. We finish with a soft block of plantain cake, piped prettily with white chocolate ganache, and a croquette of stewed apple described wittily as a deep-fried apple crumble. "We want to redefine what a Black-owned restaurant like this can be," says our marvellous waiter, who could manage this room singlehanded. The crowd on this side of the park, rum punches in hand, are lapping it up. Natty can indeed cook.

AS CAN RAYMOND FOWLER OVER AT RapChar, a crowded corridor of a space on Brixton Water Lane, which has been many restaurants in the nearly 35 years I have lived in this neighbourhood. Fowler tells his story on the website: of growing up in a Jamaican orphanage and concluding that the kitchen was the way up and out for him; of being mentored and sent out into the world with pockets full of recipes. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the food here draws particularly on that Jamaican repertoire, with added largesse and heaping and saucing. There is braised oxtail, and a curry goat pie and of course, jerk chicken, which edges that at NattyCanCook. Mortley's 2210 version has all the right flavours and the authentic hit of smoke. It also comes with a superb croquette of the leg, sultry with allspice. But his jerk uses breast, which demands and gets sensitivity. Jerk needs a bone-heavy cut that can take more of a spanking.

At RapChar, Fowler serves a half bird that has developed exactly the right "bark" or spiced crust, which has us chewing away at the wing tip and the leg, and fighting for the skin. It comes with a sweet, pimento-spiked sauce, and glistens with scattered pomegranate seeds which bring a burst of juice to the salt. There are ebulliently glazed jerk wings to start, and grilled king prawns on a sauce rich in ground peanut. An expertly cooked seabass fillet flops over a mound of buttery mash with more king prawns standing sentry and a tricolour of sauces, all of which makes me worry about portion control. But Fowler is here to feed, and the local Afro-Caribbean community has come this evening to be fed. There are cocktails and there is Red Stripe. There is music, and a mac and cheese with a mighty orange crust that could be sawn through with a knife.

Both chefs have talked about the need to understand that Caribbean cooking is about more than the bare-bones takeaway. It says much about the response to certain food traditions that they feel obliged to make this point. (If you do want a great takeaway experience, head at weekends to Maureen's Brixton Kitchen on Railton Road, which operates out of her literal domestic kitchen.) It does not devalue one expression of that food to see it approached in another way. Both restaurants and both chefs are advancing the conversation. They are telling their stories. And they're serving terrific food while doing so.

jay.rayner@ft.com

PHOTOGRAPHY *by* ANDY SEWELL • STYLING *by* GEORGIA RUDD

Recipe Club

A lamb biryani to warm you through

Readers often tell me that January is the time of the year they turn to cooking from the Indian subcontinent because of the welcome hit of heat, plus for many it's a break from the types of meals that dominated December. This spiced lamb biryani comes from the menu at Mayfair's Ambassadors Clubhouse, which is one of the most maximalist, showy restaurants I've eaten at over the past few years. Only a handful of its (excellent) recipes could be considered home-cook friendly, and among them the stand-out is this lamb biryani with Punjabi spices. Don't mistake the long ingredients list for laborious cooking – most goes straight into the marinade.

Harriet Fitch Little

DRINK

A cold beer, or a lassi if you're going alcohol-free.

SUBSTITUTIONS

The only things you might struggle to find in a mid-sized shop are almond slivers, which can be replaced with flakes, and ghee – which is quick to make at home by clarifying butter. If you are substituting the cut of lamb, avoid those intended for slow cooking, eg shoulder and neck.

TIP

Cooking "on dum" is a traditional technique used in India, especially for biryani, where the ingredients gently steam in their own juices and aromatics. For it to succeed it's essential your foil and lid seal is tight.

AMBASSADORS CLUBHOUSE'S LAMB BIRYANI

TO SERVE FOUR

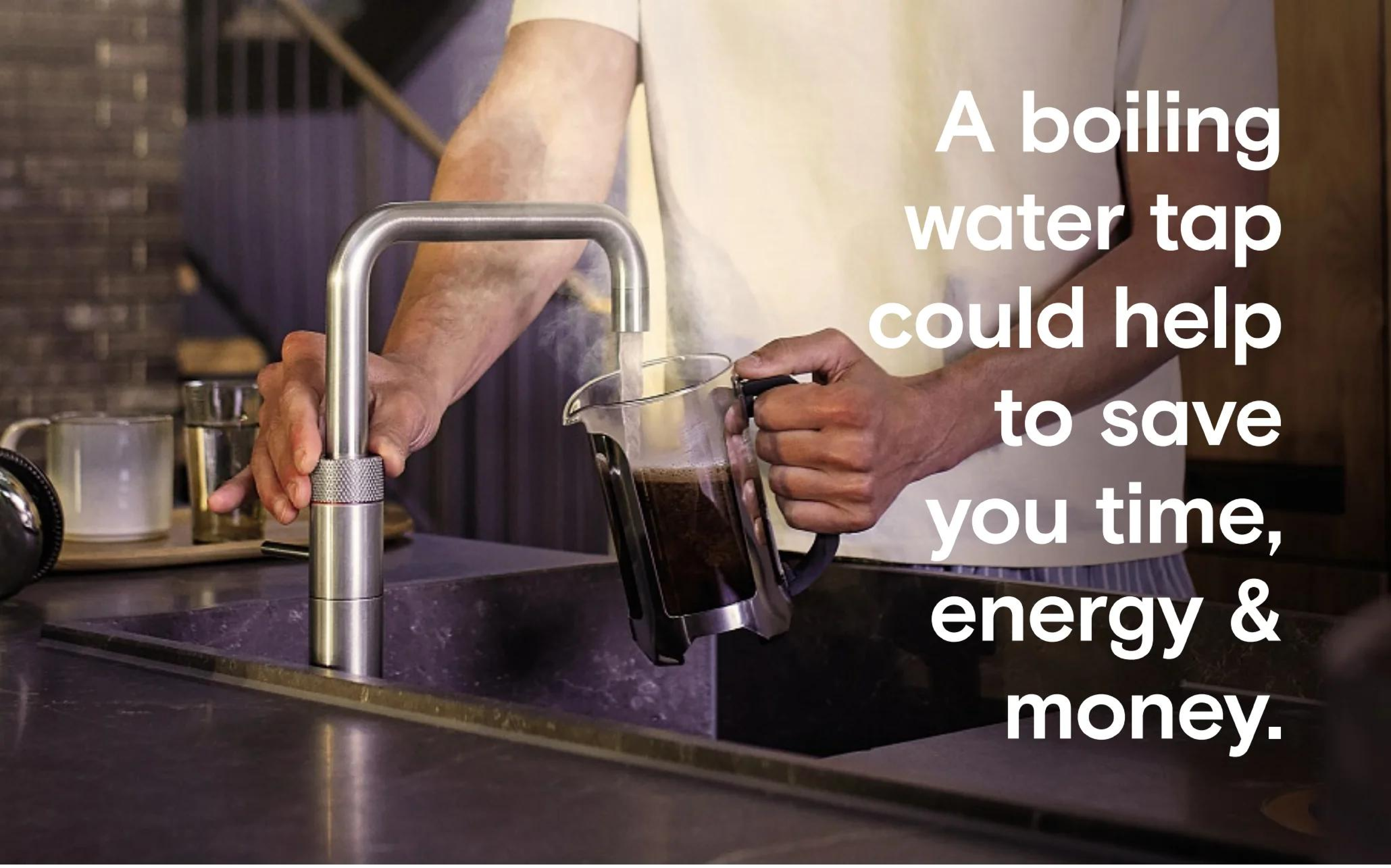
- 800g lamb leg, deboned, fat trimmed and cut into 2–3cm chunks

For the marinade
- 200g natural yoghurt
- 1½ tsp grated ginger
- 1½ tsp grated garlic
- 1½ tsp Kashmiri chilli powder
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 1½ tsp coriander powder
- 1 tsp cumin powder
- 1 tsp garam masala
- 2 green chillies, slit open
- 2 tbs lemon juice
- 2 tbs neutral oil or ghee
- 1½ tsp salt

For the biryani
- 300g basmati rice, aged for preference
- 4 green cardamom pods
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 cloves
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 tbs ghee
- ½ a carrot, cut into very fine matchsticks
- 1 tbs fried raisins
- A pinch of saffron, soaked in 3 tbs warm milk
- 2 tbs chopped mint leaves
- 2 tbs chopped coriander leaves
- 1 tbs fried onions
- 1 tbs fried almond slivers

1. Mix all the ingredients for the marinade in a large bowl. Add the lamb and coat thoroughly. Refrigerate for at least two hours, overnight for best flavour.
2. Heat the ghee in a heavy casserole or Dutch oven. Add two of the cardamom pods, one cinnamon stick, one bay leaf and all the cloves and fry for one or two minutes until fragrant.
3. Add the marinated lamb, removing any excess marinade and cook over medium-high heat until lightly browned and the marinade has thickened. Add 150ml of water, cover and simmer gently for 45 minutes, until the meat is tender and coated in a rich masala.
4. Rinse the rice until the water runs clear. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil with the remaining whole spices, then add the rice and cook for 10–12 minutes until about 70 per cent done (the grains should still have a firm bite). Drain and, if possible, spread on a tray to steam-dry.
5. Heat some ghee or neutral oil in a small frying pan. Fry the carrot sticks and raisins until lightly golden, then drain on kitchen paper.
6. Spoon half the lamb masala into the base of a heavy pot. Top with half the rice, drizzle with half the saffron milk, mint and coriander. Repeat with the remaining lamb and rice, then the saffron and herbs, finishing with a drizzle of melted ghee. Top with the fried carrots and raisins.
7. Cover tightly with foil and a lid. Cook over a very low flame for 20 minutes (or in a 160C oven for the same time). Rest for 10 minutes before opening.
8. To serve, garnish with fried onions and almond slivers. Serve with a cooling cucumber raita salad – although biryani is a meal in itself.

NEXT WEEK – A WINTER WARMER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Critic Unchained

I'm in with the out-crowd

by MARINA O'LOUGHLIN

ILLUSTRATION *by* JARED NANGLE

I once went to Florence in very early January. Yes, I know I've been vocal before about my disenchantment with many Florentine restaurants, but that doesn't mean I'm out of love with the city. No idea why I went at that time of year, but it has set a pattern for travel ever since: going to over-touristed cities when it's the off-off season.

Because that version of Florence wasn't an elbows-out nightmare, but simple enchantment. Crisp and deliciously cold, the streets still draped in a million shimmering Christmas lights, I had the city to myself: no queues for the Duomo or Uffizi, no having to jostle with a million zombified tour groups, slumped over their phones rather than gazing at the city's Renaissance beauty.

Tricky bookings in the hottest restaurants were easily come by – hello, Cammillo's prized front room, *cin cin* to Sostanza *senza* squads of American bros. Hotels were cheaper, and the occasionally frosty Florentine welcome became distinctly warmer. During summer visits, I never ever walk over the rammed Ponte Vecchio. This time it was mine, all mine.

November in Sicily was equally heavenly. In the suffocating summer heat, there's never any discussion about what to do: beach or air-conditioning, nothing much in between, with a great deal of time dedicated to showering. Going so far out of season – it's a part of the world where puffer jackets are unleashed in September, irrespective of the temperature – allowed me to take things even more slowly, properly exploring the real lives of Baroque towns Ragusa Ibla and Modica. I could really take the time to explore the many odd, ancient little stores – I love an Italian hardware shop above all things; or shops selling nothing but slippers that look like they'd never seen the 21st century. Or linger in fusty, drowsy cafés with glass cabinets full of frutta martorana – elaborately fashioned marzipan fruits – sipping a granita ripe with mulberries and blowsy with cream. Or finally hit that sepia underwear emporium where the proprietrix measures your bra size by leaning over the counter and grabbing a handful.

This January I'm off to Athens. Parthenon queues? Pfft. And I'm determined to at some point hit Scicli at Christmas, when the whole town takes part in *presepe vivente* – living Nativity scenes – so you constantly stumble across a Mary or Joseph or Wise Man. I feel sorry for those tourists who persist in clogging the likes of Rome's ancient byways in the grisly heat of August. Actually, nah – strike that. You deserve everything you get.

> During summer, the Ponte Vecchio is always rammed. This time it was mine, all mine

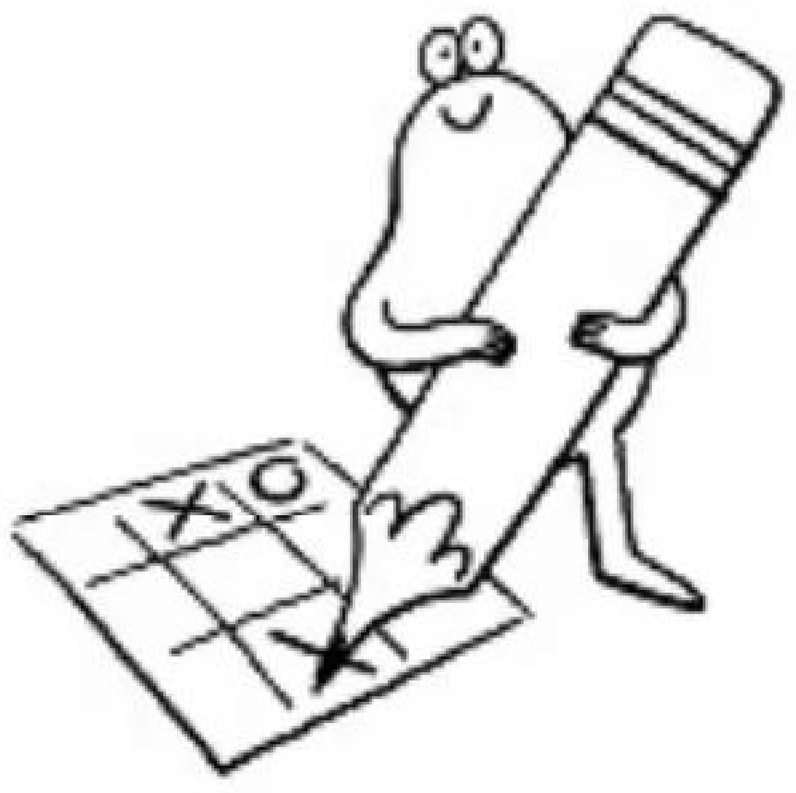
But sometimes I've avoided the crowds in less benign ways. Back in 2010, just as I was about to set off for Bangkok, the UK Government issued a warning not to travel to the city: there was an anti-government "red shirts" uprising taking place, with violence on both sides. The pal and I decided we'd be fine for no good or sane reason and off we sallied.

The Bangkok Four Seasons, where we thought we were lucky enough to be staying, was on a road that had been cordoned off at each end by protesters with, which I was startled to see, food stalls: even raging activists must eat. And the taxi driver who took us through them – they waved us past quite cordially – muttered grimly, "Tonight, you sleep alone." He was right. We were the hotel's only guests. I cannot describe the surreality of having afternoon tea, gloriously Thai-flavoured, all alone in a vast, luxurious lounge space, all alone apart from a handful of staff and, playing away with all the fervour of the band on the Titanic, a string quartet.

The weirdest bad-timing experience I've ever had was Venice the day after 9/11. The world was in shock. It had also, almost to a man, halted any travel plans. But, for a significant birthday, and in typically understated Glaswegian fashion, pals had booked a palazzo on the Grand Canal and were hitting it come hell, high water or history-defining cataclysms.

Venice was unlike itself in the most unsettling way, a weird depopulated city, post-apocalyptic in mood. Until I'd turn a corner and there would be another Glaswegian trilling "Hyaaah!" laden down with fake Gucci from the indomitable street traders who weren't going to let world disasters and the absence of other tourists cramp their style.

To see Venice like this without its usual burden of visitors was an incredibly affecting experience, but one that was stained with an unshiftable veneer of horror. Sometimes having a city to yourself can feel all manner of wrong. FT

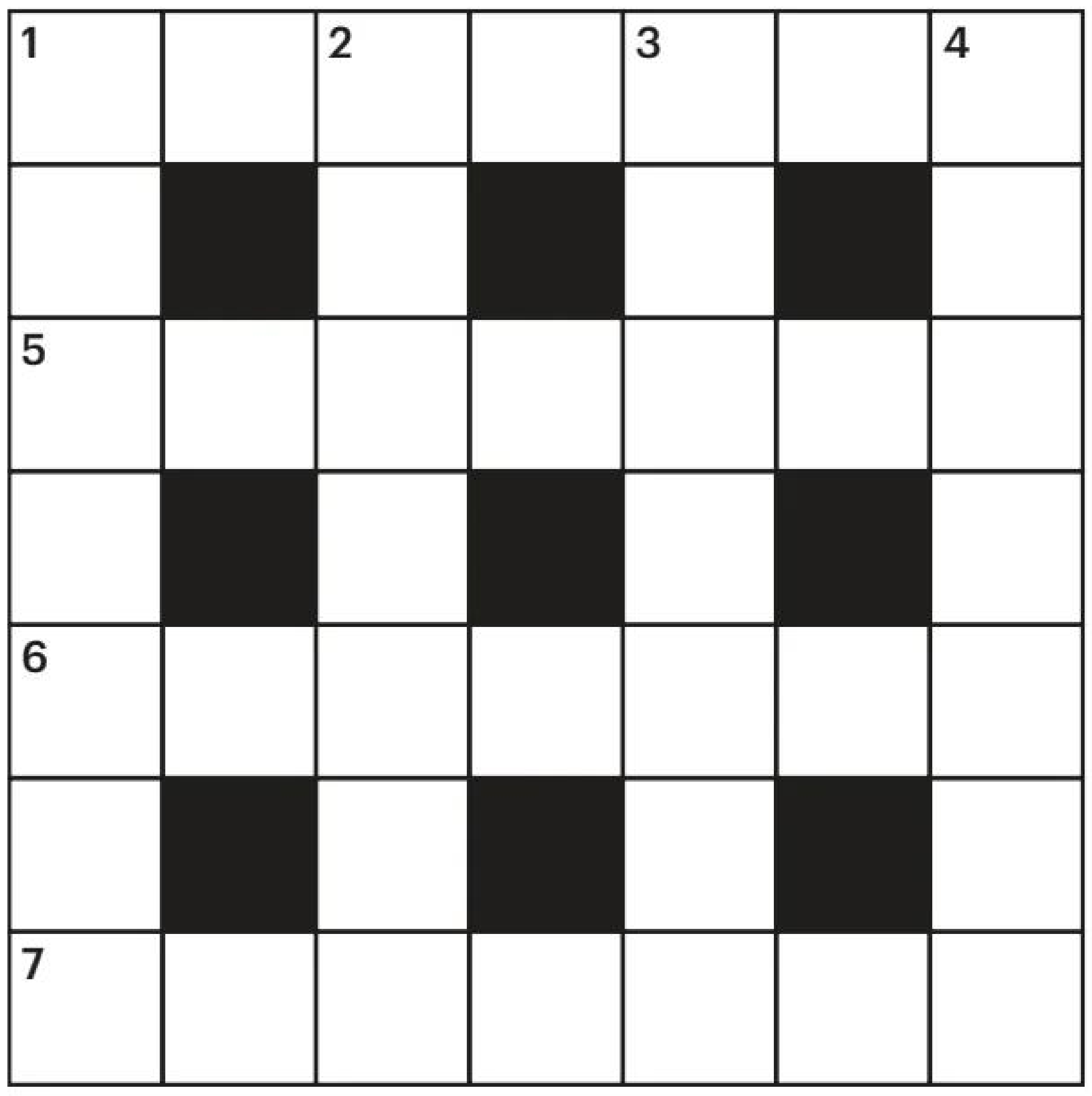


GAMES

MINI CROSSWORD

NO 91 SET BY SOLOMON

8 clues
2 straightforward
2 general knowledge
2 cryptic
2 anagrams



ACROSS
1 Siemens (7)
5 Cargo weight (7)
6 Present stream (7)
7 Most excellent (7)

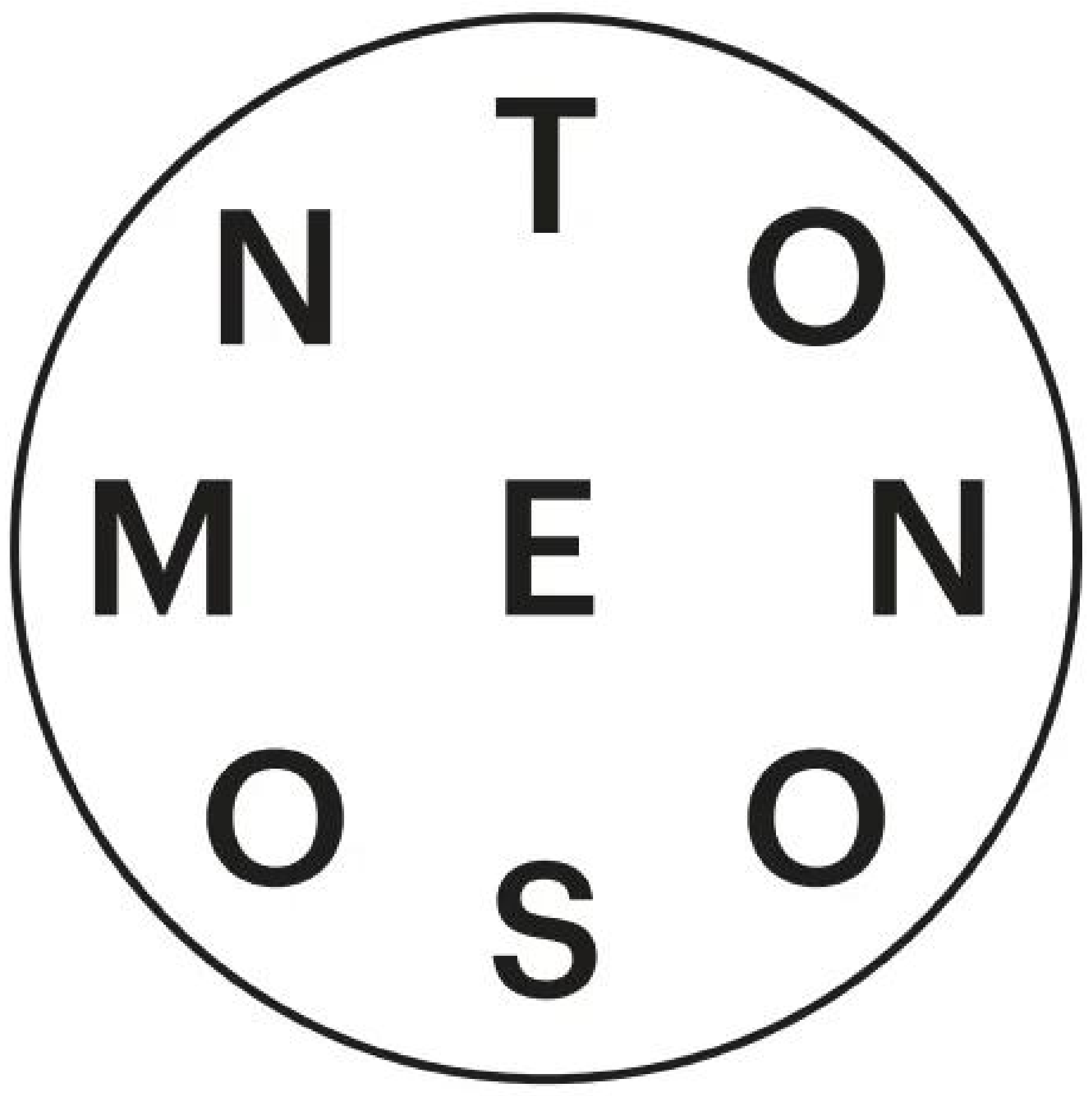
DOWN
1 Spots adverts (7)
2 Rampant (7)
3 'The _____ Cat Song', number from *Lady and the Tramp* (7)
4 James Bond film released in 2015 (7)

Access FT crosswords from the past 30 days – Cryptic, Polymath, Weekend and Sunday Puzzles – on ft.com/crosswordapp

WORD CIRCLE

NO 91

How many words can you form that use the centre letter plus two or more of the other letters? No letter may be used more times than it appears within the circle. There is one word that uses all nine letters.



SCORING
GOOD – 25
GREAT – 35
AMAZING – 40

BINARY PUZZLE

NO 91

Place 0 or 1 in every empty square so there is an equal number of each digit in every row and column. In any row or column, there must be no more than two of the same digit in succession.

0	1	1			1		
	0			1		1	1
						1	
		1				0	1
1	0				0		
	0						
1	1		1			0	
		0			1	0	0

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SOLUTIONS

FOR ISSUE DATE
DECEMBER 27

Mini Crossword No 90

C	L	O	T	H	E	S
A	■	C	■	O	■	T
S	T	E	L	L	A	R
T	■	A	■	B	■	E
L	E	N	I	E	N	T
E	■	I	■	I	■	C
S	T	A	U	N	C	H

Binary Puzzle No 90

0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1
0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1
1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1
1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0

Word Circle No 90

age, ages, ague, august, bag, bags, beg, begs, bug, bugs, gab, gabs, gas, gate, gates, get, gets, guest, gust, gut, guts, jag, jags, jug, jugs, sag, sage, stag, stage, **subjugate**, tag, tags, tug, tugs, usage

The scoring for number 90 is:
Good – 20
Great – 25
Amazing – 30

Some incorrect solutions were included for Word Circle number 89 in the edition of December 27 2025.

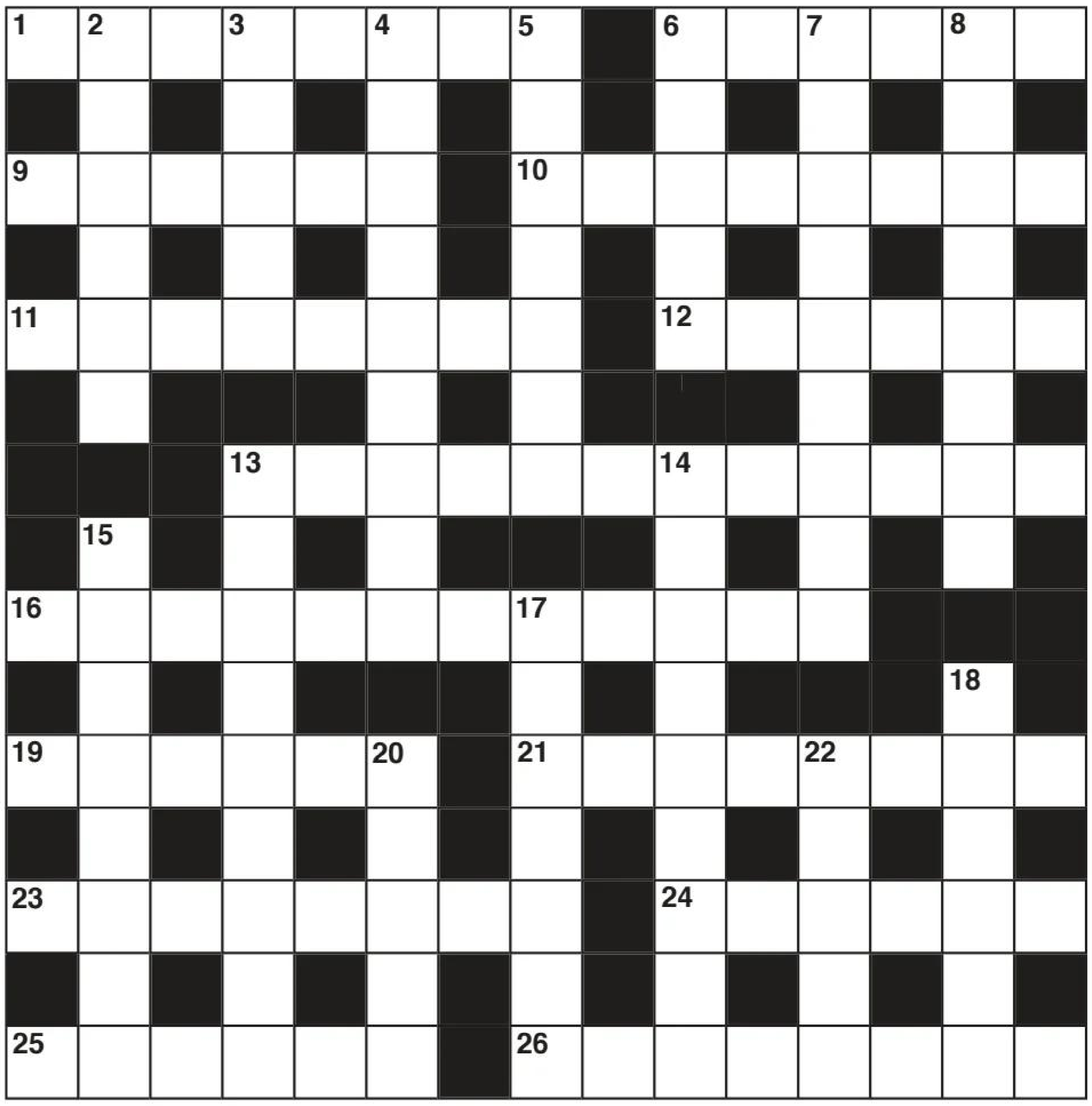
THIS WEEK'S QUIZ ANSWERS

A round on the links
The link was political families/dynasties
1. Churchill
2. Roosevelt Island
3. Lord Chamberlain
4. *Gandhi* (Richard Attenborough)
5. Kennedy 6. *Kim*
7. Brad Pitt (Angelina Jolie)
8. Burning bush
9. Castro 10. Paisley

The picture round
Sam Fender + Bender (from *Futurama*) =
Fender bender

THE CROSSWORD

NO 775 SET BY ALDHELM



The Across clues are straightforward, while the Down clues are cryptic.

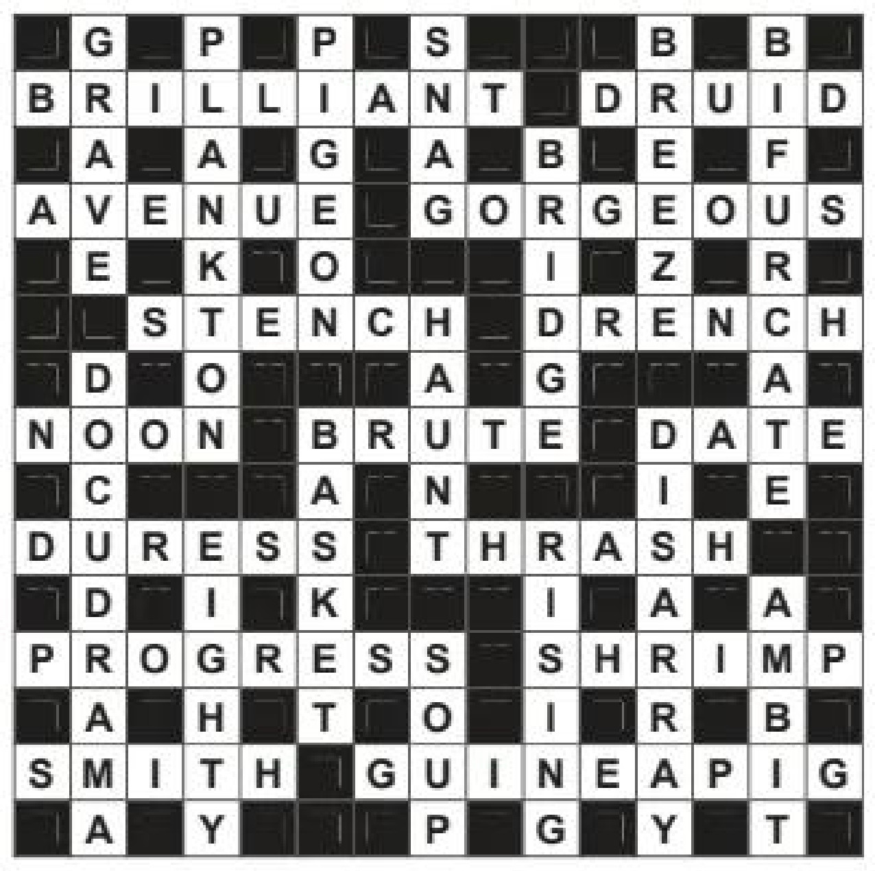
ACROSS

- **1** Vital, essential (8)
- **6** Highly elaborate ornamental style (6)
- **9** Write untidily (6)
- **10** Worthwhile, beneficial (8)
- **11** Shift, relocate (8)
- **12** Northern French port (6)
- **13** Medical clinic (6, 6)
- **16** Very easy task (1, 5, 2, 4)
- **19** Fleet, navy (6)
- **21** Symbolic moral story (8)
- **23** Protrude (5, 3)
- **24** Slight pain (6)
- **25** Religious entreaty (6)
- **26** Deserter, traitor (8)

DOWN

- **2** Heads of research explore line account (6)
- **3** Can get artist inside coach (5)
- **4** Garden structure farmed with difficulty under mountain pass (4, 5)
- **5** Handle alien young creature (7)
- **6** Fragment from agriculture licence (5)
- **7** Clean leg that's broken without hospital trial (9)
- **8** Dog on railway is mine (8)
- **13** Chief meets your leader under what sounds like more lofty ranking (9)
- **14** Fake map hides the French one (9)
- **15** Old phone assistant with speaker encompassing phone's ends (8)
- **17** Top of leaf's swallowed by larger fawn (7)
- **18** Initially fixed, unbending and icy (6)
- **20** One to endlessly grieve for love affair (5)
- **22** Track condition of current instrument outside (5)

Crossword No 774



	G		P		P		S				B		B	
B	R	I	L	L	I	A	N	T		D	R	U	I	D
	A		A		G		A		B		E		F	
A	V	E	N	U	E		G	O	R	G	E	O	U	S
	E		K		O				I		Z		R	
		S	T	E	N	C	H		D	R	E	N	C	H
	D		O				A		G				A	
N	O	O	N		B	R	U	T	E		D	A	T	E
	C				A		N				I		E	
D	U	R	E	S	S		T	H	R	A	S	H		
	D		I		K				I		A		A	
P	R	O	G	R	E	S	S		S	H	R	I	M	P
	A		H		T		O		I		R		B	
S	M	I	T	H		G	U	I	N	E	A	P	I	G
	A		Y				P		G		Y		T	

GETTY IMAGES; ALAMY

A ROUND ON THE LINKS

BY JAMES WALTON

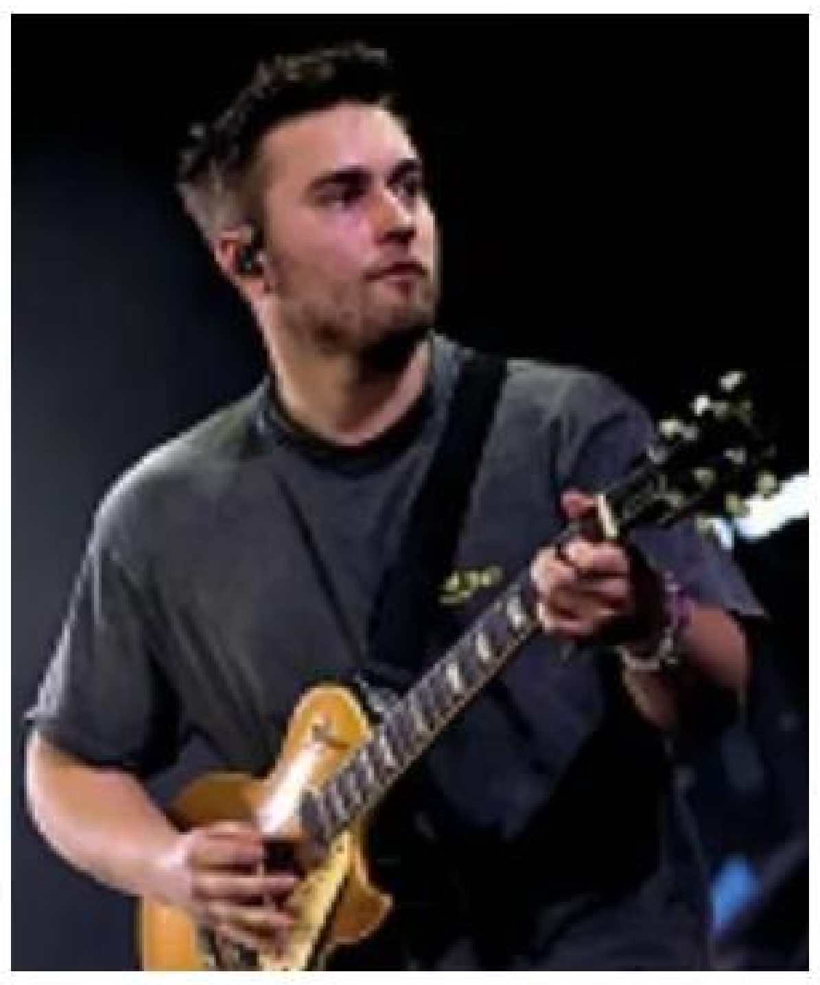
All the answers here are linked in some way. Once you've spotted the connection, any you didn't know the first time around should become easier.

1. Which car insurance company was founded by Martin Long in 1989?
2. What's the biggest island entirely within New York's East River?
3. Until 1968, which official was responsible for theatrical censorship in Britain?
4. Which 1982 biopic won eight Oscars – including one for its British director?
5. What is the shared surname of Ray and Alan, who both played for Liverpool in their victorious 1981 European Cup final (*pictured*)?
6. O'Hara is the surname of the eponymous main character in which 1901 Rudyard Kipling novel?
7. Who comes next in this sequence of husbands: Jonny Lee Miller, Billy Bob Thornton...?
8. In the Bible, from what does Moses first hear the voice of God speaking to him?
9. The oldest and most famous gay neighbourhood in San Francisco is known as the... *what* – from one of its main streets?
10. Which Renfrewshire town that gives its name to a textile pattern is the biggest town (ie, non-city) in Scotland?

THE PICTURE ROUND

BY JAMES WALTON

Who or what do these pictures add up to?



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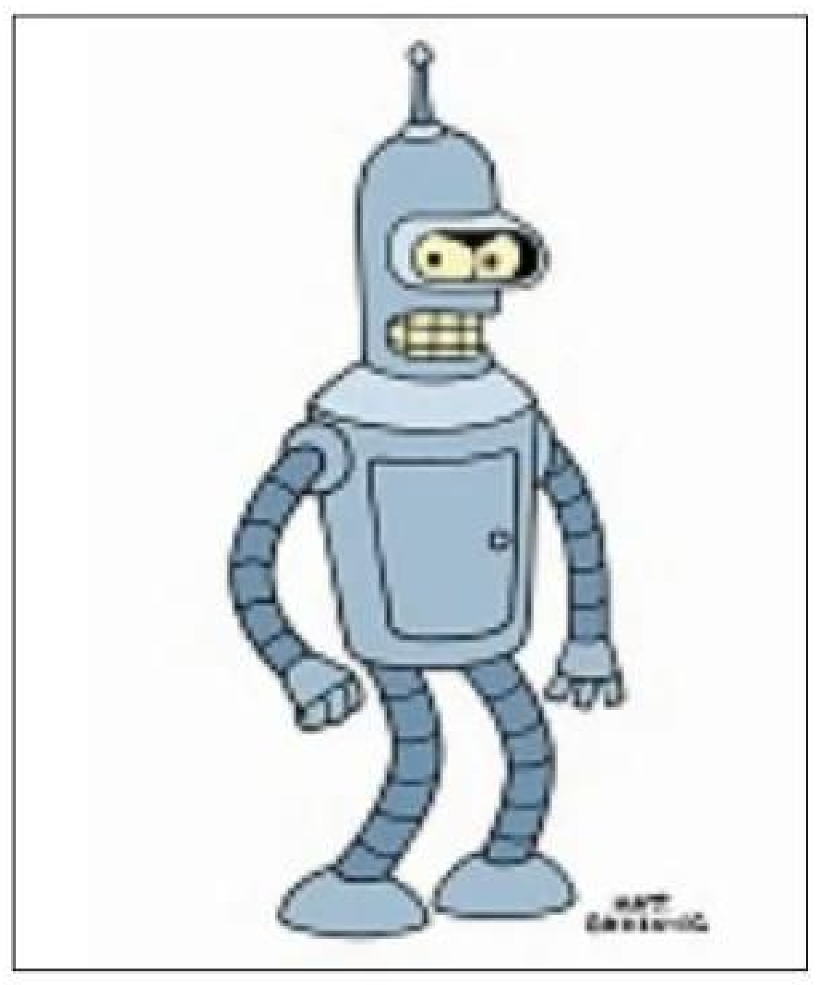

= ?

Answers opposite

What Fresh Hell

Is it time for a digital detox?

Work, life and family dilemmas solved by *Robert Shrimsley*

ILLUSTRATION *by* LUCAS VARELA

Well it's less effort than joining a gym; cheaper too. In fact, as new year's resolutions go, there is a lot to be said for the idea. It costs nothing; it's easily reversed once your determination weakens.

Of course, it wouldn't be a new year's resolution if you didn't boast about it but, if you can keep schtum, no one needs to know that you have the backbone of an invertebrate, when you give in. As for the timing, well, if it's a new year's digital detox, then this would indeed seem to be the moment to start, especially so if you need to be back online by February.

Anyway, the question is timely because quitting social media, or indeed going for the full digital detox, seems third only to joining a gym and dieting in the self-improvements being urged upon us at this point in the year.

There are two kinds of digital detox to consider. The first, full-fat version appears to involve ditching your smartphone, perhaps purchasing an old Nokia (dumbphone) with nothing more than a game of *Snake* or *Bounce* to while away the moments of boredom. This kind of detox also envisages less digital use generally, so no idling away on the laptop either.

For all the attractions, I cannot in all conscience recommend this path. Ditching your smartphone is a bit like insisting on carrying two twigs when a box of matches is available. Yes, the matches offer opportunities for destructive behaviour, but they are also a lot more convenient. Whatever the downsides of excessive phone usage, there is simply too much value in carrying a small computer which can tell me when the next train is due, the route to my next destination, the cricket score (well, maybe not just now) and the name of the actor you never recognised in *The Magnificent Seven* (Brad Dexter).

A more moderate and achievable path would be restricting your usage of said tech. You might decide to switch off all devices after a set time, ration your podcasts, leave the phone in your pocket when sitting with other people and so on.

> Deleting TikTok could save me up to 30 minutes of wasted time a day, or 7.5 days a year

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The other detox being widely urged is quitting social media. I don't need to reprise all the important reasons, though for me the primary one is that so much of it is a gigantic waste of time. X and Bluesky are relevant for my work but I have made my own first concession to the detox by deleting TikTok. This annoyingly addictive app was occupying increasing amounts of my time in quiet moments of passive doomscrolling and displacement activity. And the returns even on Instagram and Facebook are also diminishing. Once it had pictures and posts from people I cared about. Now my feeds are increasingly filled with ads, or news from those I don't follow. As with TikTok, the algorithms are so vicious that merely lingering for a moment means you are bombarded with similar guff. When it is amusing animals it is harmless and even occasionally cheering. Sadly, not all algorithmic outcomes are as gentle.

But the best reason for ditching social media is that you will live longer. OK, that's not exactly true. But you will be giving yourself more time. Deleting TikTok could save me up to 30 minutes of wasted time a day. That is 182 hours, or 7.5 days a year. Just by quitting TikTok I have extended the time left to me by a week each year. Deduct the hours spent asleep and it is 11 days' worth of waking hours a year, three months each decade. That's 11 days in a year, when I could be reading a book, listening to music, getting exercise, engaging in a fulfilling hobby or just being a bit more present for those around me. If I restrict Insta and Facebook to one visit a day, the numbers rise higher. True, I will no longer know the latest dance craze and will be unaware of the AI-generated immigrant riot that has not in fact taken place, but I'll get through it somehow. I will miss the capybaras, though.

And unlike exercise or dieting it requires no effort, no costs, no special food, no pain. And you will live longer, or at least approximate being alive for longer. And of course I haven't touched on the more important reasons to ditch platforms which are curiously depersonalised, harmful, corrosive, increasingly fake, unpleasant and demoralising.

This may fall short as a full digital detox, but it offers real results with sacrifices sufficiently small that maybe you will stick with them. If not, I'll see you back there in February. FT

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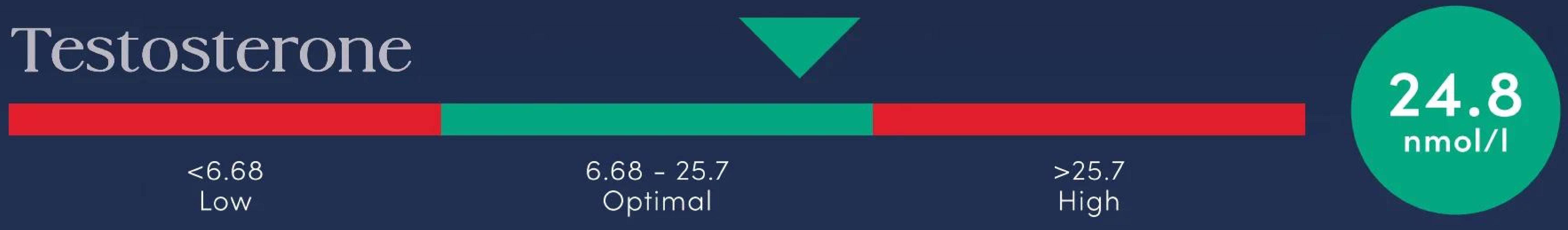

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